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CHRIST THE LIFE AND LIGHT

LENTEN READINGS

SELECTED FROM THE WRITINGS
OF THE

RT. REV. PHILLIPS BROOKS, D.D.

Late Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts

By W. M. L. Jay

LONDON
MACMILLAN & CO. L'T'D
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PREFACE

As the observance of Lent becomes more general, suitable Readings for the season become more and more a necessity, or at least a desideratum. A former book of such Readings, *The More Abundant Life*, made of selections from the writings of Bishop Brooks, met with so much favor as to warrant the conclusion that a second one, made on the same lines, would not lack a welcome.

In all that he wrote and preached, Bishop Brooks was wont to strengthen the point that he was making by a reference to Christ as the Teacher, the Pattern, the Helper, the Redeemer,—in short, as the Life and Light of the world. It is this fact which justifies the title chosen for this—the latest, and probably the last, of the many books published in his name. It might be given with equal fitness to almost everything that he wrote; therefore it seems especially appropriate to close the long list of works through which he so powerfully spoke, and "yet speaketh," to men and women who are doing what

they can, in their personal measure, to be life- and light-givers to their world,—to the world immediately around them which, be it large or small, public or domestic, is open to their influence and example. To all such, because of his high and hopeful estimate of human worth and possibility, Phillips Brooks is sure to be an inspiration and a help.

It is right to mention that the signs of elimination are not always given in the text. In order to bring out the special lesson clearly, with the indispensable condensation, it often became necessary, especially in the introductory portion of each Reading, to put separated sentences together. If the gaps had all been indicated, the paragraph would have had a fragmentary, disjointed appearance that could not be otherwise than detrimental to its consecutive interest and force. Due care was taken that no change of meaning should result from this arrangement, but rather that the essential meaning should be all the clearer.

W. M. L. JAY.

NEW YORK, January, 1905.

CHRIST THE LIFE AND LIGHT.

Ash-Wednesday.

I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.—DAN. ix., 3.

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of.—2 COR. vii., 10.

ON Ash-Wednesday we cannot help remembering how large a part of the history of our race has been made up of that which this day represents. All times, all races, have had their days of ashes. Five hundred years before Christ, there is this picture of Daniel humbling himself for his own sins and the sins of his people; back of him stretches the long line of penitents and mourners till it is lost in the darkness that enshrouds the earliest ages of man; and between his day and ours what a host of men and women have had to put aside all thought

of brightness and complacency in life, and stand with ashes on their heads pleading for forgiveness and comfort! We come into one of the deepest and most universal sympathies of human life when we come to keep another Ash-Wednesday at the beginning of another Lent.

And there can be no question of more importance to us than this: What is the true attitude of him who stands covered with ashes as a sign of penitence and sorrow? Turn and think of Daniel in his lamentation, partly because his lamentation is lofty and unselfish and inspiring, but also because one phrase which he uses has in it the key and secret of all true humiliation and sorrow for sin. It was with his "face set unto the Lord God" that he lamented and repented. It was not simply lamentation, it was lamentation which looked towards God.

There is something noble about that. Stained with its sin, conscious, deeply conscious of the stain that is upon it, the soul yet turns and looks right into the face of the perfect Holiness, the absolute, white light of the spotless goodness of God. Ah, do you not know how hard that is? You have done wrong. You have been false, impure, irreverent, unkind. You are repentant. You want to be forgiven. But is that just the moment when you are

readiest to face the absoluteness of God's nature? Do you not want some background less severe on which to lay this blurred, stained life of yours? Or do you, with a sublime desire to know the worst, set your face unto the Lord God, and insist on seeing your life against Perfection, and cry out like David, "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence"?

Well for you if you do! Well for you if your soul refuses to be satisfied with anything but that thoroughness! For the holiness of God, to him who looks at it with eyes softened and quickened by penitence, bears witness of itself as the true pattern of the human life. It looks into the penitent's eyes as Jesus Christ looked into the faces of publicans and sinful women in Jerusalem, and says, "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Thus it becomes revelation and salvation to the sorrowful soul.

A sense of sin which does not look to God, which either hardens into despair or pities itself with sentimental lamentation over its own feebleness,—that soon counts itself cut off from God. But there is a sort of self-despair—the breaking-down of a soul's self-reliance, the desertion of a soul by its own trusted strength—which makes it, for very

desperation, turn to God and look into His face; and, looking there, the soul knows God, and cries, "O God, Thou art my God!" And then all the new life with its new strength opens before it.

That is the repentance which can never be repented of, the repentance in whose recollection and fruits the soul will delight though all eternity. To that repentance Christ brought all the penitents that came to Him. It was the way in which He was able to let them see the Lord God in Himself, to make their looking in His face the same as if they looked to the Lord God,—it was this that proved how divine He was.

But one thing on your heart to-day is this: You are truly penitent, but you cannot forget that you have been truly penitent before. Not for the first time do you lift up your voices, crying, "We have sinned!" Does not this set your hearts to asking, "Is it of any use? Have all our old repentings come to nothing? Are we just to go on repenting over and over again forever, and never come out into the bright land where repentance shall be needless because sin has ceased?"

What can we say to such a questioning as that, except that, so long as sin lasts, repentance must

come over and over again? And yet, no recurrence of sin, with its everlasting demand for repentance, must make us doubt that every one may some day or other come to the glory of sinlessness. A thousand times our feet may slip back as we climb the hill, a thousand times we may come to the unseen chasms down into which we must go before our feet can come up and continue their journey on the other side. But never lose sight of the hill's top as the certain goal which we must reach at last,—that is our inspiration, that is our safety.

And one other thing: If a soul is really all the time advancing in the spiritual life, though it constantly repents, its repentances are not mere repetitions of each other. Each new repentance is on a higher level, born of a finer sensitiveness of soul and opening a richer vision of the face of God. As we mount by a gradual road into a higher and higher country, we are always going down into valleys on our way; but each valley's depth is loftier than the valleys, loftier even than some of the hill-tops, of the previous way. St. Paul repented of his sins and called himself the "chief of sinners." When he said and thought that of himself was he really back where he first felt his sin, on the road to Damascus, or even behind that in Tarsus, where

first he knew a boy's crude repentance and went to the High Priest of the synagogue for help? Surely not. He never could have written those words to Timothy if he had not first climbed to the height where such a perception of himself was possible, climbed upon the devotion and faith of his long years of discipleship. And there are saints repenting on this Ash-Wednesday, with a kind of repentance that is possible for them only in virtue of their deep love and their long and faithful service of their Lord.

It was an old custom of the Church that the ashes which they put on the altar on Ash-Wednesday were those which they got by burning the palms of the last Palm Sunday. So the essence of our most rapturous communion with our Lord may be present still in our most humble penitence before Him for our sins.

May this Lent find us farther on our way than the Lent which we kept last year; and may it be so kept that it shall make possible for us still richer Lents in the years which are to come! May we be very humble in it, very penitent for our sins; but may it be a penitence which looks full in God's blessed Face, and sees there, with new brightness of revelation, how glorious it is to be good and holy,

how deep is His unchangeable love for us, and what a true right we have to Him because He is our Father.

Although my sin is great,
Still to my God I flee:
Yes, I can dare look up and say,
"Have mercy, Lord, on me!"

Lo, I set Thee before the eyes of my mind, and I lift up my soul unto Thee. I fall down and worship humbly, and stretch forth my hands suppliantly; my soul is as a thirsty land. And though I am ashamed for my great shortcoming, let me hear Thee say, "Thy sins are forgiven"; and let me love much for great forgiveness.—Amen.

Thursday after Ash-Wednesday.

And be clothed with humility.—1 PETER v., 5.

WE are thinking, during Lent, about the duty of being humble. But what a poor thing we make out of humility! The word itself and its history are interesting. It was not a new word when the New Testament was written. It, or its Greek equivalent, was very common. It always meant meanness of spirit. It described a cringing soul. It was a word of slaves.

Where could we find a more striking instance of the change that the Christian religion brought into the world than the way in which it took this disgraceful word and made it honorable? To be humble is to have a low estimation of one's self. That was considered shameful in the olden time. It seemed to be inconsistent with that self-respect which is necessary to any good activity. Christ came and made the despised quality the crowning grace of the culture that He inaugurated. He re-

deemed the quality, and straightway the name became honorable. It became the ambition of men to wear it. Pride began to ape humility when humility was made the crowning grace of human life.

Christianity's great, primary revelation was God. His greatness, His holiness, His love,—nay, we cannot describe Him by His qualities, for He is greater than them all,—He, by the marvellous power of His Incarnation, shows himself to man. And what then? God in the world must become the standard of the world. Greatness meant something different when men had seen how great He was; and the manhood which had compared itself with lesser men and grown proud now had a chance to match itself with God, and to see how small it was, and to grow humble about itself. . . . But if the revelation is not only this; if it includes not only the greatness, but the love of God; if the majesty that is shown us is the majesty of a Father, which takes our littleness into its greatness, makes it part of itself, honors it, trains it, does not mock it, then there comes the true graciousness of humility. It is not less humble, but it is not crushed. It is not paralyzed, but stimulated. This is the philosophy of reverence and humility as enrichers of life and mainsprings of action. . . .

This is one of the ways in which Christ rescued and exalted humility: He set man's littleness against the infinite height of God. The next way is even more remarkable. He asserted and magnified the glory of humanity. He showed us that the human might be joined with the Divine. He showed us that the human soul was worth all the mysterious and terrible redemption of the cross. Thus He glorified human nature; and by this glorification He taught man that it was his true place to be humble. Ah, if a man must be humbled and yet is exalted by his humility when he sees God, surely when he sees the possibility of himself, there is no truer or more exalted feeling for him than to look in on what he is, and think it very mean and wretched by the side of what he might be, what his Lord has shown him that he was made for. The more he thinks of what he might have been, the less he thinks of what he is. It strips his pride off from him and clothes him with humility.

But the name "humility" is perhaps more generally, at least as often, used to describe an attitude which man takes before his fellow-men. What is it to be humble before one another? Is it any such unreasonable demand as this, — that every man should really think he is worse, wickeder, duller

than every one of his fellows whom he meets? The moment that we state such an idea we see its impossibility. . . . Honor your own life as much as you will, only . . . if you believe with all your heart that there is nothing in you too good to be employed in the divine work of helping some lost child back to the Father, then you have really learnt the humility of Christ. Do you remember Him? The Supper was ended, and strangely on that solemn night the disciples had fallen into an untimely dispute which of them should be the greatest, and then the Lord Himself rose from the table, and tied the towel round His waist, and went from one wondering disciple to another, and washed the feet of all. And then He interpreted His own parable: "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." It was the truth of His whole Incarnation wrought into a homely picture.

One of the truest ways in which Christianity has made humility at once a commoner and a nobler grace has been the way in which it has furnished work for the higher powers of men. Work is always tending to humility. Work touches the keys of endless activity, opens the infinite, and stands awestruck before the immensity of what there is to

do. Work brings a man into the good realm of facts. Work opens the measureless fields of knowledge and skill that reach far out of our sight. And all this, which the ordinary occupations of life do for our ordinary powers, Christianity, with the work that it furnishes for our affections and our hopes, does for the higher part of us.

It seems to come to this: Christianity is the religion of the broadest truthfulness. It does not set men at any work of mere resolution, saying, "Come, now let us be humble." That would but multiply the endless specimens of useless mortification. But true Christianity puts men face to face with the humbling facts, the great realities; and then humility comes upon the soul as darkness comes on the face of the earth, not because the earth has made up its mind to be dark, but because it has rolled into the great shadow.

It is the narrowness of our lives that makes us proud. I should think you men and women would be proud of your splendid houses—if you could look no farther. But if you could see God forever present in your life, and Jesus dying for your soul, and your soul worth Jesus' dying for, and the souls of your brethren precious in His sight, and the whole universe teeming with work

for Him, then must come the humility of the Christian.

To that humility let us devote ourselves, for in a humility like that alone is peace.

All service should be done for Thee
In meek humility,
  And awe most sweet,
That Thou shouldst take,
E'en for Thy Son Christ Jesus' sake,
  Service from servants so unmeet.

O blessed Jesus, Fountain of mercy, and spotless Mirror of the Majesty of God, wonderful is the greatness of Thy mercy towards us, which neither the reason of men nor the understanding of angels can unfold; for Thou deignedst to appear among men in the humble form of a servant! Grant to me also the wisdom of meekness, that I may not exalt myself, and provoke Thine indignation, but bow down and receive the gifts of Thy mercy in humble thankfulness; for Thy holy Name's sake.—Amen.

Friday after Ash-Wednesday.

In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.—JOHN xvi., 33.

"THE world"! what do we mean by that vague term? Fairly enough for our present purpose, may we not say that "the world" represents the great accepted tendencies of things? The "world of politics" represents the tendency to corruption and selfishness which seems to be the drift of life where men engage in government affairs; the "world of business" means the tendency to selfishness and materialism and sharp dealing; the "world of fashion" means the absorption in frivolity and thoughtlessness and rivalry in silly show; the "world of religion" describes the disposition to cant and unreality and superficial sentiment which haunts the outskirts of all sacred thought and high emotion. This is what "the world" means when we speak of it in a bad sense.

And what tyrants they are, each of these worlds

and the whole great world which they make up together! The tragedy of life is in this power of the great accepted tendencies of things, this power of "the world." It seizes the child almost at his birth; it holds him faster and faster as he grows to be a man: it gets behind his actions and binds its chains upon his standards and ideas, until he is convinced that rebellion is useless, that his great, arrogant master is invincible.

What if there comes a man who does resist, who does defy the great accepted tendencies of things, and is successful in his revolt? He goes into politics and is pure. He lives in the world of business and is spiritual and sympathetic. He will not let society make him frivolous. In the midst of the religious world he is manly, simple, and transparent as a child. Is there no emancipation for others in his victory? The arrogance of the great bully trembles and fades as one brave, simple soul stands up and faces it; and hundreds of other souls see what a feeble and arrogant spectre it is that they have feared. Many discouraged and despondent hearts, whom life has beaten and dismayed, gather new courage and are of good cheer when they see how he has overcome the world.

There have been thousands of such lives partially

realized in every age and land. There was such a life supremely in the life of Christ. All His life was sacred and divine. With Him each gift was full of the idea of stewardship. He knew no selfishness; all was consecration. . . . And so, when His long fight was almost over, when His hand was almost reached out for victory, He saw a vision which made His victory almost an easy thing. He saw His victory making possible through all the years to come the victory of countless brother souls; and, looking round on the faces which stood to Him for all the faces of humanity, He said in tones full of joy and love: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

Moreover, when the strong man comes and lifts the load that we could not lift, and flings aside the despot whose foot has been on our necks, it is not only the despot's weakness that is revealed to us, it is the real strength of the human nature which we share with him that shines out on us from his life. That is a better revelation than the other. It goes deeper. It goes wider. It displays to me the strength which is in our human nature as something inherent and essential; capable of being turned, the same strength still, to each man's varied task. What though that strong man's fight was with a

lion, and mine be with the bear? The same human strength which met and killed one may meet and kill the other.

All this applies to faith as well as duty. Let a believing man stand forth, a man of large heart and soul and brain, believing in men as more than clods, and in God as more than sunlight; let him draw motives out of the Infinite; let him worship and pray; and out of his devout, religious life the cry must come to many men: "Behold, the things we see, things material and tangible, are not impassable. I have been in behind them, and have breathed the breath of spiritual life. Man has a spiritual nature, for I have prayed and worshipped. 'Be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world.'"

I speak of great men, great believers, but every man is great, whatever be the dimensions of his personal genius and the amount of his accomplishment, who lives in great ways and for great ends. Every man is great who does duty, or who has real faith. Let us know this, and in every little circle, in every set of men and women where souls are standing paralyzed by the seeming impossibility of duty and the seeming helplessness of man, may come these revelations of the weakness of the world and the

strength of belief. Any true soul may bring them. You may bring them if you will.

Does the tyranny of the world, the despotism of the accepted tendency of things, reign in the shop, the school, the college, the home, in which you live? Be very sure that the spell of that tyranny is always just on the brink of breaking, always just ready to be broken. A new, rich, fine, sweet life is sleeping just where a touch will awaken it.

God grant to us all the privilege of bringing to some company of our fellow-men, by the power of our lives, the cheer of knowing that the world is not invincible, and that the human soul is divinely strong!

The world is not the old world. It has been redeemed. Therefore the weakest struggler in it has the new forces, the stronger forces, of the world upon his side. O pressed and wounded fighter, strike boldly, for your enemy is half-beaten, and is doomed to ultimate destruction. O weary soul, lift up your burden, and find it lighter in the atmosphere of the Redemption. O men and women, be of good cheer, for the Son of Man, who is also the Son of God, has overcome the world.

Such faith, O God, our souls sustain,
Free, true, and calm, in joy and pain,

That even by our fidelity
Thy Kingdom may the nearer be.

O Lord Jesus, Thou who didst defy "the World," suffer from it, and conquer it, give me the grace of faithfulness, firmness, and courage; for Thy mercy's sake.—Amen.

Saturday after Ash-Wednesday.

And he said, Here am I.—Exodus iii., 4.

Perhaps there is no characteristic in which men are more different from one another, or which creates more different careers, than this characteristic readiness, this promptness and immediateness of life. When God called Moses, his answer was: "Here am I." He was already somewhere: that was his starting-point. He was already where God had put him, and so he was ready to proceed to whatever God should call him to.

Readiness is often success. He who says, "Here am I," when a new need summons, carries off the prize. The engine does not know in what quarter of the city the fire will break out, but it stands with its horses all harnessed and its fires laid, that it may start in a moment when the midnight telegraph startles it with its alarm. The unaccountable changes of business open a new market in some unexpected place, and the watchful merchant sees

it, and his ship comes sailing up the new harbor, reporting herself for the new need.

It is a very beautiful thing that a man is often ready for a duty which he is never called upon to perform; and if he is truly ready for it, he gets the same blessing for his readiness that he would from the performance of the act. The outward career is not essential. This was what comforted Milton when, lamenting the helplessness of his blindness, he remembered that "They also serve who stand and wait." God knows not only what we do, but what we are ready to do.

This readiness redeems for us our commonplace lives. It does not criticise its duty, does not care whether it seem small or great. The greatest tasks that we are called to do are insignificant in themselves; the smallest tasks are mighty if they come from God. So many people are quick to cry, "Here am I!" at the top of their voices when a great, showy task is to be done; but some obscure duty, that no man will see if they do it, goes begging here and there and finds no one who welcomes it.

The case seems to be this: Man needs a witness and a sympathy, in what he does, to do his best. The world seems to stand witness and to sympathize

with him in his greater acts. But when they are over and he has just to drudge along day by day, what then? Unless the soul so thoroughly believes in God that He is its Audience and its Sympathizer, it must work alone and grow disheartened. I do not believe that religion is nearly so much needed for the great crises of life as for its dull, flat plains. There, where every other eye seems withdrawn, where men have left us to ourselves, where we are just beginning to think that it does not matter, and are looking round for the softest place at the road-side to go to sleep on,—just there we become aware of the calm, deep sympathy of God, who wants us not to be discouraged, who sees the unseen beauty of the dreary work that He has sent us; and then the better courage comes, and we do it for His sake.

And here there appears one of the great blessings of Christ's Incarnation. Think of it! The Son of God came down from heaven, and how did the earth look to Him? From end to end He saw it blossoming with chances to do the Divine Will. It has grown so familiar to us in the blessed story that it seems strange no longer, but it did seem strange at first to all who saw it, to all those Pharisees and Scribes, that He who claimed to be God's

own Son should call it God's work to sit with publicans and sinners, to teach the common people, and to go with a foreign soldier to the chamber of his sick child. We talk of readiness!—was there ever a life that stood alert and ready like that life of Jesus Christ? He caught the whisper of a human need, and He started as the anxious mother starts from her bed when her sick child coughs or moans in the night. He saw His Father in all these His children, and so when any of them wanted Him and summoned Him with the silent imperiousness of suffering, it was again to Him as if the Father looked for a Redeemer for His lost ones; and the Son stood forth in eager self-sacrifice, saying, "Lo, I come!" And when He went away He left in us an impulse like His own. He bade us hear His call in every duty, as He had heard His Father's, and so be ready for it with all the alertness of our love for Him,—"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

How utterly the whole consideration of prominence or obscurity fades away when a man really seems to be hearing any call of God! You have been at work for Him in some conspicuous labor, leading His causes, marshalling His forces; some day you hear His call in a different direction. And

when you follow Him, He leads you into a dim and silent chamber and shows you a sick-bed and bids you lie down there and wait. The call comes out of the Burning Bush, but though it be in agony, the soul answers willingly, "Here am I," and takes its place. For all duty is one to the soul that asks not, "What task shall I choose?" but "What wilt Thou have me to do, O Lord?"

So we present ourselves to Christ for His mercy and His service here; and then, some day in heaven, we lay our hands to the perfect service in the perfect world, saying anew, "Here am I."

Ready to go, ready to wait,
Ready a gap to fill;
Ready for service small or great,
Ready to do His will.

O Heavenly Father, grant me such readiness to hear and answer every call of Thine, that I may be fruitful in good works, and with pure affection fulfil all Thy will, through the quickening power of Thy Holy Spirit.—Amen.

First Sunday in Lent.

And the Lord said unto Satan: All that he hath is in thy power. Only upon himself put not forth thy hand.—JOB i., 12.

ONE grows bewildered as he thinks how deep are the questions which here lie open, how vast are the issues which the author of this poem suggests. But in this verse one clear subject stands out by itself. It is the necessary limits of the power of evil. What God commanded may have referred first to the physical life of Job. That was not to be extinguished in all his sufferings. But the verse suggests something more. It suggests that there are limits to the spiritual power of evil, that there is something in every man, a true self, which by God's decree cannot be arbitrarily invaded by any power, a self in which the man sits supreme, and which cannot be conquered unless he surrenders it.

Think of the temptation of Christ in the desert. The Evil Spirit attacks Him, takes Him hither and

thither, beats and mocks Him, but it never reaches His Self. He is always separate and safe. And it is easy to understand what it was in Jesus Christ which the Enemy, with all his powers, could not invade. It was the Will. Over everything else he asserted his power. The pain and the temptation which come to us out of this world's disorder, came to Him also. He felt the hunger, and He must have longed to escape it just as we do. Over those beaten paths by which he comes to our destruction, the Power of Evil went to the destruction of our Lord. Only, when he came to the centre, where he finds our wills so weak, he found His will completely strong.

It is the will, then, in which that self resides, which the power of evil cannot touch unless that will voluntarily yields. The will is the man. All else are his circumstances, his delights, the material out of which he makes his pains and pleasures. Around that central will there lie in widening circles the interests and associations of his life; and every different kind of evil has its power to invade, to less or greater depths, these outworks of the man's self. Mere physical pain can pierce the outer circle, and hurt the skin and flesh. The loss of wealth or rank pierces a little deeper, and invades the pride. Bereavement plunges its sharp dagger far, far deeper,

and wounds the keen and sensitive affections. The sight of sin touches our moral sense and stirs our grieved indignation. Temptation boldly strikes within them all, and lays its hand on the desires which are close about the will. But none of them can come into the very centre by any power of its own. There sits the will impregnably intrenched. It hears the footsteps of its invaders, near or far away. Some of them march up to its very door, but none can enter and take it captive till it draws the bolt itself and is its own betrayer.

Is not this what we need above all things to know? Think of the Christian's trials. His peace, his glowing love, his perfect joy of trust, his warm delight in realized communion,—all these are dear to him. They are the bright surroundings of that central self of his religion, his own deliberate and willing dedication of himself to Christ. They issue from it and they glow around it as the sunlight issues from and glows around the sun. But if they are all quenched and broken, if the color and the glory die,—what then? If delight and peace are only memories marked by their ruins, still the Christian has a right to know that they are not his Christianity. Still, in the centre of the circling ruins, the will may cling to that changeless love of

Christ in spite of every seeming change, refusing to be any other than its Lord's, no matter how its Lord may be hidden from it; and then there is no power in earth or heaven to separate that soul from its Saviour.

The freedom, the power, of self-reserve, which this will possesses is absolute. It can shut its door on whom it pleases. The strongest, clearest assurance of this is in the way in which not even its Maker will force Himself upon it, unless it choose to let Him in. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," says Christ. "If any man will hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." *If any man will open unto me!* Not without the man's own willingness will even God come into His children's hearts. And shall we think that He has given to His enemy a power which He has denied to Himself? Nothing can force us to be good: let us be just as sure that nothing can force us to be bad.

I am not making the keeping of one's strength and purity an easy thing. I am not picturing an easy self, a luxurious and independent will, counting itself beyond attack. Such a self-confident will as that is doomed to fall. It invites treason. That is why tempted and tried souls are giving up the fight

of life on every side of us. Our truth is that the soul itself does and must give up. It is the soul's own weakness, not the irresistible power of its enemies, that finally treads it in the dust or leads it away captive into sin. If a man is true to himself, no power in the universe can make him sin.

"True to himself," we say. The first thing is that he must know that he has a self. He must unwrap all this enveloping mass of occupations and amusements and companionships and reputations, which he calls his life,—all that vague aggregate which men mean when they talk of him,—and inside of it all must find that which is really *he*, that which would last if all these things were stripped off and destroyed, that which God made, which God is educating, and which God will judge.

Briefly: the true self of every man is in Christ. When He came into the world, He brought the humanity of every man in the humanity which He assumed. He brought your self and mine, and what we ought to be, and what we might be,—nay, more, our power of being it was in that human life of Jesus Christ. If we want it, we must go there for it.

Does this sound mystical and vague? See, rather, how reasonable it is. What is it that Christ shows us all? First, what we were meant to be—

the pattern of our human life. Then, that God loves us, and pities us because we have fallen so far away from that. Then, that He will forgive us and restore us if we turn to Him. Our first ideal, God's present love, our future hope,—these are the Christian truths. He who sees what God wants him personally to be, how God loves him personally and what a personal salvation is ready for him if he will repent, to him the mist must clear away; the self must disentangle itself from its circumstances; and with its rights, its responsibilities, its hopes, and its needs stand clear before him.

In other words, he who serves Christ out of obedient love comes more and more to feel and say: "Many things may make me suffer, but nothing can make me sin but my own will. And if I can fill that with His strength, I can be conqueror of everything through Him."

> So, when the fight begins within himself,
> A man 's worth something. God stoops o'er his head.
> . . . The soul wakes and grows.

O God, Who makest all things to work together for good to them that love Thee, grant that every temptation may but make me strong in Thy strength, and rich in Thy sufficient grace, so that my footsteps slip not, but ever press on in the way that leads to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Monday after the First Sunday.

Thus saith the Lord God: Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.—EZEKIEL xi., 16.

WE must remind ourselves what it is that the word "sanctuary" means. It is a place made sacred by the presence of God. The architecture and decoration, the mysterious lights and shadows of the Holy of Holies in the Jewish temple, were not what made its awfulness. It was that Jehovah was there. There He shone in the Shekinah . . . and it was that supremely manifested presence of Jehovah there which made that place, as no other place on earth could be, a sanctuary.

Is there not, in the life of every man whose life fulfils itself, something which perfectly corresponds to this central sanctuary of Jerusalem? There are hours when God is not more truly present with us than at other times, but when we claim and feel His

presence, and shut the door and pray; and on bended knees we tell our soul's wants directly into the ear of the all-hearing Love. . . . Visions of what we are in God's idea of us, and of what we might be in the entire fulfilment of that idea; certainties, absolute certainties, of God's unaltered and unalterable love; deep communion with Him;—all these lie at the centre of the spiritual life. Nothing which God can do for the soul in its less conscious hours can supersede the necessity of these times, supremely, absolutely lived with Him.

But when a soul has done that, when a soul has had these hours of rich communion, then the question comes: What shall be done with the rest of life? How is it with the hours when the church and the closet must be left behind, and in the Babylon of the world the man must be living the common life of men?

Here is the home life. How many fathers and mothers, heads of houses full of children, full of cares, see in their households only a Babylon! The self, with its deep needs, is swallowed up in the confusion of the busy days. Must we not say that the trouble lies in the conception which pervades many homes, that the home-rulers are to be Christians and live spiritual lives not in virtue of, but in spite

of, their occupations and household cares? If they can get rid of that idea, if they can expect to see God coming to them not over nor around, but through, the home relationships which He has built, then Babylon is transfigured, and in the very tumultuous heart of the overcrowding worry the little sanctuary springs to life.

There seems to be an even bitterer exile when the soul leaves the closet for the shop; but surely there is something wrong if the active years have not their own nearness to God, which they alone can give. . . . Does God want those things done which you are doing every day? Does He want the railroad built, the process of civilization maintained, the family supported, the laborer supplied with work? Are the operations of your trade as legitimate outpourings of true forces as the movements of the planets or the blowings of the wind? If they are, then he who does these things may dare to think of himself as God's co-worker, and down the medium of their common work the presence of the great Worker may flow and surround His fellow laborer. It is not work, but work done ignobly, done undivinely, that separates the man who works from God. Do not desert your work, but pierce to its heart, exalt it to its loftiest conception, if you

would be more holy. Strike God's iron on the anvil, see God's goods across the counter, put God's wealth in circulation on the street, teach God's children in the school,—so shall the dust of your labor build itself into a little sanctuary where you and God shall dwell together.

In the great cathedral of the world there is the high altar of perpetual visible religion, where the worship is forever going on. There all men meet and own themselves, in conscious and deliberate devotion, the sons of God. And then there are the chapels, each with its special altar, where they who have their own peculiar work to do find that grace of God which in that work gives itself to man. . . . To go down from the high altar to the chapel is not to go away from God. To pass out of the great, inspiring thoughts into the personal duties is not to cease to be religious. It may rather be the clothing of religion with reality, the grip and grasp on truth and God and light. There in the little sanctuary, He who in the great sanctuary our careless souls may have missed may make us see Him and believe Him and love Him, and take Him for our own.

So may it be with you. You need God for the very things which seem to separate you from Him. You must seek Him in the very places where the mis-

ery of life seems to be that He is not. You must question the stoniest paths for springs of water.

What does the miracle of Jesus Christ mean but this? "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" and lo! the Saviour is a Nazarene. "Can any man provide food here in the wilderness?"—and they took of the loaves and fishes "as much as they would." "He saved others, Himself He cannot save,"—and behold! forth from the cross shone the glory of the Son of God.

Some day the exiles shall go back to Jerusalem. They shall be in the unhindered sight of Him that sitteth on the throne of the Lamb forever. While they abide in Babylon may He give them grace to see that He is with them there, and to rejoice in the little sanctuaries which He makes, and which He is, for them in their land of exile!

Wherever Faith doth bend the knee,
Wherever Love stands steadfastly,
Where Duty toils with willing heart,—
Be it in home, or field, or mart,—
There temple-wall and altar rise,
And God accepts the sacrifice.

O Lord, mercifully guide my steps, that I may exile myself to no place where Thou art not, and that I may have clear eyes of faith to see Thee wherever Thou art: For Christ's sake.—Amen.

Tuesday after the First Sunday.

Because the creature itself shall be delivered from bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.—ROMANS viii., 21.

THE question how the child of God ought to deal with the world he lives in is one which may be answered in a very small or a very large spirit. The answer to it may be only in a set of rules for the regulation of the Christian life, or it may be in a generous effort to find out and make the best and noblest use of the world we live in. Whatever the answer, the question cannot but be asked. No man can live and not in some way, more or less intelligent, ask himself what all this creation has to do with his human life set down in the midst of it.

"The creature" means the whole created world, all this great mass of beings, less than man, animate and inanimate. And the first truth in St. Paul's statement is that all this creature, all this creation, shares in the life and destiny of man. All truest study of the world finds in the human life its purpose and its key. It is not a mere conceit; it is the

reasonable sense demanding of this great complexity some principle and point of order which declares the same truth which the wondrous book of Genesis declares,—that man is the master of the world, and out of his condition sends forth its glory or its degradation to all the rest of the creation. And this general truth is illustrated and enforced anew in every single life. What each man is, that also is his world, the world about him.

St. Paul lived in the midst of philosophies which believed something very different from that. They said: "The world is bad, so bad that it imparts its badness to the human soul. The reason of the human wickedness is that man lives in a wicked world." A mean and cowardly philosophy always! whether it displayed itself in that degenerate age in which the great Apostle lived, or whether, the same thing still, it furnishes you now with an excuse for some sin which you want to commit, but are not brave enough frankly to take its consequences.

St. Paul stood bravely up against all this. "The world is not bad," he said; "the world is just what you make it." . . . The truth is, man is a slave. The creature, then, is a slave of a slave. There is no hope for the slave-servant until the slave-master is made free.

Everything centres, then, in this: Man, if he does not own himself the child of God, and live as if he were, is not free, is a slave. The more I see of men, the more I wonder how any man can bear to hear that great word, "freedom," used for a moment about the condition in which he finds himself. For what is freedom? "The power to be and do the best that we were made for." The instant that I set that definition up before me, I know that I am not free. God forbid that this which I am, this which I can do to-day, this which I am doing, should seem to me the limit of my life, that I should not think God designed me for something better than this! A chain is on my arms, or they would surely reach to higher duties; a weight is on my brain, or it would think truer thoughts; a cord ties the wings of my soul, or it would surely go up nearer to God! Every deepest consciousness convinces me of my bound and restrained and imprisoned state.

What though my superficial consciousness keeps assuring me that I am free? What though I find that, even with the chains upon my arms, I can still use them enough to play my games and do my ordinary work? The curse of the deepest slavery is that it thinks itself free. Very often, only with the

fact of freedom comes the knowledge of the bondage which has gone before; and so, only with the new life of the child of God comes the sight of what a broken and imprisoned life the man had lived while he was outside of the family where he belonged.

When a man enters into the sonship of God through Christ, then he learns the pitiableness and misery of his past life. So much that used to seem fine to him now seems miserable! So much that he was proud of he now is ashamed of! The father has taken back again into his house the child who has been wandering; and the child, looking out through the safe and happy windows, sees the desert which he thought was a garden, and learns for the first time how desolate it was.

Do you need no liberation? If to-day all power of sin, all fear, all obsequiousness, all selfishness were lifted off of you, would you not be another man? Would not your whole soul and body, your whole nature, leap into activity and joy which it never dreams of now? Oh! we are not free, not wholly free, one of us; and we never shall be until we are thoroughly back in our Father's family, the children of God through Christ. If the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed.

And when the race of men is emancipated from the slavery of sin "into the glorious liberty of the children of God," the creature also is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The fall of man and his long struggle upward brings the picture of a world all thorns and thistles; the full Humanity of the Redemption walks by the River of the Water of Life, among the ever-fruited trees.

> To love is boundless freedom. It is life
> From self enfranchised, opening every vein
> To let in glory from above, and give
> What we receive in fragrance, color, fruit,—
> Life which is heaven's; ourselves dead matter, else.

Lord of all power and might, bestow upon me, I pray Thee, both freedom and bondage; free me from all slavish lusts and desires of the flesh, and bind me to Thee in Thy service which is perfect freedom. For Christ's sake.—Amen.

Wednesday after the First Sunday.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace.—ROMANS viii., 6.

"LIFE" and "peace" are two words which certainly express the best desires of the best men. To be alive, to have all one's powers in full activity; and to be at peace, to be free from distress and tumult and uncertainty,—give a man both of these, and what is there left for him to desire? St. Paul tells us that the door to this perfect existence is spiritual-mindedness.

The first feeling about spirituality, before it can come to any good and healthy growth, must be that it belongs everywhere, that there are not certain objects only for the spiritual mind to exercise itself upon, but that every subject has its spiritual side; and that each man carries for himself the responsibility as to whether he will deal spiritually or unspiritually with everything which the Lord puts in his way. For the truth is forever true, and yet forever forgotten, that spirituality is a quality of the

human soul, and not of the things that the soul deals with. And so there is nothing high or low which the soul may not deal with spiritually or unspiritually, as it will.

How we are living on the surface of things everywhere! How we are dealing with the flesh and not the spirit of everything! Think what would be the condition of any household in which spiritual questions took the place of carnal questions, and you must realize the state in which we live. Of the daily accidents that now mean nothing, the question in this family would be: What did God mean by sending this? Of their intercourse with one another it would be: How can we help each other to the best spiritual growth and usefulness? Of the furnishing of the house, of the hanging of the pictures, of the setting of the table, of the inviting of the guests, of the treatment of the servants, of the division of duties and the laying-out of plans, the universal question would be not for the comfort of the bodies, but for the stimulation and the satisfaction of the souls of the father and mother and the boys and girls. Do you know any such household? And yet here are so many households that we do know, dull with a death-like lethargy of intellect and heart, or kept forever in a tumult by dispute and restless-

ness! Surely our unspiritual homes are not so live or peaceable that we can say we do not need for their salvation that spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace!

One of the strangest things about this character of spiritual-mindedness is the way in which so many people think of it negatively instead of positively. To them, to be a spiritual man simply means to be incapable of the occupations and pleasures which make up most of their own life. There are many of the boldest struggles of ambition and the most applauded victories of popularity of which a man becomes incapable when he takes to himself the new life of spiritual-mindedness; as the artist, who learns to do sweet and subtle things with his fingers, finds those fingers incapable of wielding sledge-hammers or lifting blocks of granite. And it is often hard, because of the worship we have for mere capacity, independently of the value of the task which it can do, for one to own that his struggle after spirituality makes him incapable of many things which the world thinks it most fine and glorious to do.

But think of the divine incapacity of Christ! We dwell with wonder upon all that He could do, but to me it seems scarcely less wonderful to think of all that He could not do,—He could not

turn aside for ease and comfort; He could not covet the world the devil showed him; he could not be tempted into bigotry or tortured into rage. When we succeed in making Him our standard, we shall know that there are inabilities as glorious and honorable as any ability can be. It is better always to be incapable of cheating and lying than to be capable of chivalrously laying down one's life in some great stress of duty. But there is no less a positive power of spirituality; and that is clearliest seen in the way in which it brings out the best colors of the best experiences and thoughts of men; and the growth of a man from unspiritual to spiritual existence is largely witnessed by the way in which his virtues graduate from the partial to the perfect life. For example, think of purity. You have struggled for personal purity against all the temptations of the flesh; you have fortified the castle of your will with every worldly bulwark—respectability, shame, ambition, health; you have struggled and you have conquered. But has not something better often hovered before you as a possibility, when, in a new spiritual-mindedness, purity should not be the poor, half-vital, fluttering thing that you have brought out of your conflict, but strong and luxuriant, full of life and peace? As that picture has come out

before you, you have dreamed of heaven, where purity shall not be a struggle of the will, but a delight and passion of the soul. Ah, yes, it must come in heaven. It cannot come till heaven come. Only remember that spiritual-mindedness *is* heaven, come when it will; and if it come here and now, then here and now purity may catch this holier light, and be the perfect thing that it will be in the heaven that is to come.

But where should I stop in telling of the transformations that are wrought by spiritual-mindedness? It takes the feeble dreams of men, and turns them into the substantial realities of God. It takes our sins, and dignifies them from being mere accidents and blunders into their true enormity, and so arouses us to repentance. It takes the things that are not seen, mere fancies and visions, and turns them into the only real realities, so that, resting on them, we go through the deepest waters. It takes death, and bridges it with faith, so that the spiritually minded man already walks in the life and peace of immortality.

May we all enter into this spiritual liberty of the children of God!

> For what is freedom but the unfettered use
> Of all the powers that God for use has given?

But chiefly this,—Him first, Him last to view
Through meaner powers and secondary things
Effulgent, as through clouds that veil His blaze.

O God, who dwellest in the holy place, yet forsakest not pious hearts, deliver us from earthly desire and unruly appetite; that no sin may reign in us, but that we with free spirits and willing hearts may love and serve Thee, our only Lord, whose name is Holy, Holy, Holy.—Amen.

Thursday after the First Sunday.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.—JOHN xv., 10.

AS we hear Christ speak these words at the Last Supper, the scene shapes itself into a picture. He is departing from His disciples; and as He goes we see Him looking back . . . full of questioning. And the burden of His questioning is this: Will they abide in His love?

All that Christ felt for those disciples He feels for us to-day. On our souls, which have entered into His love and given themselves to His service, He looks with the same questioning: Will they abide?

There are two sorts of pleasure which we have in the truths and beliefs to which we have come. One is the pleasure of strangeness. "I never dreamed of being here! How came I here?" we say. The other is the pleasure of familiarity. "Here is where I belong: all that I have been or thought before has prophesied this," we exclaim when the new place

claims us and we claim it. Both kinds of pleasure are real; but it is in the second, not the first, that the promise of persistency abides.

Everything has its true place, struggles to get into it if it is out of it, struggles to stay in it if it is in it. And so when the soul dares to think of the new life as its true life, when it considers itself not as a captive who has been brought into a region where he has no belonging, but as an exile to whom the doors of his own land have been opened, and who has come home from his wandering,—then, for him, the grasp that seizes him is very strong, and departure becomes almost impossible.

The prodigal comes back to his father's house. It is partly starvation that has brought him there, partly disgust at the life he has been living, partly the dimly felt power of the father's love; but, whatever draws him, when he is once there the house declares itself his house. Every nook and corner, every wall and doorway, has its voice for him. It is the sacred mystery, the gracious might of Home. It is not violence, but the satisfaction of his life to be there: it would be violence to go away. And so, in the great, simple Bible words, "he goes no more out forever."

No new taste, or belief, or attainment or condition

in life is really ours until it has borne this testimony of naturalness to us; and once borne, that testimony is reduplicating and deepening itself all the time. Every new experience of the Christian sets free some new relationship, some new reaction between himself and the Christian life, the Christhood into which he has been set. He confesses, and confession opens a new channel through which the naturalness of forgiveness flows into his life. He obeys, and obedience crowds his willing nature down a little deeper into the strength of God which may be his. He lives the new life, and every breath he draws tells him that he is at home. The winds out of the hill-tops feed him with refreshment that he recognizes. The ground under his feet breaks out in fruit to which unguessed but native appetites in him respond. Each day that he lives makes it more sure that he will live there always.

The second quality that must belong to your faith in order that it may be permanent is that it must be large enough to give you a chance to grow within it. The personality of a great person is the largest room in which a soul can live. Our Christian faith has two necessary aspects: it must be regarded both as the acceptance of certain truths, and as loyalty to a great Master—Christ. The Christian

to whom his faith most constantly and naturally presents itself in the second aspect, as a personal affection and loyalty, will be the Christian who will find within his faith the freest liberty of growth. Let your faith be a faith in Christ, and it is large enough to hold not merely all the growths of time, but all the unguessed growths of the eternal years.

Finally, the faith that is persistent must lay hold of the deepest parts of us, and there are two which are the centre of our life. As brain and heart and lungs exist in doubles, and do their work by action and reaction, so the soul of man has its completeness made of these two corresponding portions—the ability to be good and the ability to do good. Beating together, they make up the unity of the life. And whatever is to be the permanent possession of the life must get into them. It must not linger in the outskirts, it must come into the central chamber and sit down there, and be felt at the creation-point of life as a true element in the life's creation. While it offers itself to the soul's deepest desires, it must suggest the larger hope which takes in the help of other souls. First, it overwhelms the believer with the need of helping his brethren, and then claims its own place as the inspiration and power of that help.

O my friends, give your religion more to do. Open for it, let it open for itself, diviner hopes and wider fields of work. The Spirit will not stay where He is given no privilege of spiritual help. Rich is the moment in which the soul, seeing this, throws open its inmost, sacred doors, and says to its faith, "Come in. Nothing is closed to you." When the faith hears and answers that summons, it is the man's and he is its forever.

That faith is supremely, absolutely personal. It is the faith in Christ, the abiding in His love. There is no fulness of life that cannot come to you in that spacious house. In time and in eternity it is large enough for all the soul of man can come to be.

May we enter into it, may we return to it if we have wandered, and go no more out of it forever!

The soul to God's heart moving on
Owns but the infinite for home:
Whatever in the past has gone,
The best is always yet to come.

O Lord, give me, I beseech thee, grace to love Thee whom now I see not, and for Thy sake to love all whom I see and can help; and grant me one day to inherit the blessing of those who, not having seen, yet have believed and loved.—Amen.

Friday after the First Sunday.

For He knew what was in man.—JOHN ii., 25.

AS we read the story of Jesus Christ, are we not filled with a certain feeling that He understood the nature with which He had to deal as we do not understand it? He was so much calmer than we are; He was not taken by surprise as we are. There never came to Him any of those moral panics that sweep over us. He saw men brutal and false and bad, but He did not throw humanity aside as hopeless. He saw men true and strong and unselfish, but He did not exalt humanity as perfect. Neither Judas nor John deranged His judgment. If, then, we can find out what His view of human nature was, it may help us to attain to some of His calmness, and so to some of His helpfulness.

Every man's theory of life is determined by three things: What he says, the way in which he treats other people, and the way in which he treats himself. And so, when I want to know what Christ

thinks of man, I go to these three points: What does He say about men? How does He treat men? How does He treat Himself?

First, what does Christ say about humanity? The most familiar, but also the clearest, most comprehensive, and most representative of all His statements of the theory of man is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Analyze that story. There are three points in it,—a noble origin, a wilful degradation, and a power of return. There are three emphatic features,—the house where he was born, the swine among whom he grovelled, the road where his father met him on his return. And what distinguishes the theory of man which Christ sets forth in this parable, is the union into which these three ideas are bound, so that neither of them can ever come up without bringing the others with it; and all together constitute in His mind one complete theory of human life. Dignity, misery, hopefulness, all blend together and make one being. That is the theory of the prodigal son.

And that same theory appears in all that Jesus Christ says about men, and in all His treatment of men. He could not look at the dying thief without seeing the divine origin in him. He could not look at His brave, loving Peter without seeing the evil

in him. He could not look at the Magdalen without seeing the hope in her. Hence came the strong, beautiful treatment of them all from the calm poise of those three sides. How healthily and truly, with what an appeal to their own consciousness, with what a power over their actions, His praise or His blame came to the men to whom He spoke!

It is not so easy to consider how Christ must have regarded His own humanity; and yet when we read that "He knew what was in man," we cannot help feeling that a part, at least, of His knowledge must have come from His self-consciousness, from that human life, so deeply, intensely human, in which He lived. And there is one mysterious scene which seems to stand as the type of this self-knowledge. I mean our Lord's temptation. I do not think we shall ever know the meaning of that scene in full. But we cannot be mistaken if we think that Christ, in that mysterious experience, was really appropriating humanity most deeply, making real to Himself those facts about it which He needed to know in His own life. Down into the depths of His temptation He must have looked, and seen the darkest human possibilities. Standing upon the brink Himself, He could look over and see where souls go that fall into the gulf.

And then, on the other side, in the reality of His trial, He felt about Him the strong hand of God. Anew He felt that He belonged to God; anew the dignity of that human life which God made capable of such a trial, the preciousness of that gold which could need or bear so terrible a test, came out to Him. And when His work of Saviourhood began, it was One who knew how closely humanity belonged to God who claimed man for His Father. It was One who knew in what terrible peril man lay who seized hold of him with eager hands to draw him out of the pit. By and by all that He had done and been, rounded and completed itself in the death which He suffered for man's sake. The Cross was His supreme declaration what He thought of man: Noble, so that he was worth the saving; sinful, so that he needed to be saved; hopeful, so that the Hand stretched down from the Cross could reach him.

Christ believed in man. But did He shut His eyes to any fact? "This is my body which is given for you," He said to Peter and John and the whole group of half-hearted disciples. Into those same faces He looked and said: "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." He was aware of all the worst of them, and yet the

enthusiasm of humanity, the honor and the hope of man, burned on unquenched. As the divine origin of the sinner only made the perception of the sin more keen, so the sight of the sin only caused to burn with deeper, brighter radiance the unquenched truth that the sinner was the child of God.

Is not this what we want? For a manly indignation against sin and for a reasonable and inspiring human hope at once, we need to see man as Christ saw him. If we can do that, every act of men will instantly create its true reaction on our healthy hearts. Sin will make us indignant, but not cruel. Goodness will make us hopeful, but not foolish. And all the life about us will draw out from us that mingled love and fear, that brotherly admiration and brotherly rebuke, and, above all, that brotherly help of man which was the glory of the Saviour's life.

> Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast
> Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed;
> Though He is so bright and we are so dim,
> We are made in His image to witness Him.

O Lord Jesus, Thou who knowest us all, yet lovest us all, give us hearts set to be like Thee even as Thou wast like us when on earth, that we may love Thee and our brethren in Thee in proportion; or, if it please Thee, out of proportion, even as Thou didst beyond all proportion love us and give Thyself for us.—Amen.

Saturday after the First Sunday.

Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.—JEREMIAH li., 50.

THE prophet is upbraiding Babylon. In words which almost burn upon the page, he has been threatening God's terrible judgments against the City of Sin. But the Children of Israel were to be spared in the great destruction; and the great purpose of their preservation was that they should return to their own land, to the country which God had given them and where their true life must be lived.

Understood thus, this rich and ringing verse becomes descriptive of God's purpose everywhere in the destruction of tyranny and wickedness. Always it is the Israel imprisoned in the Babylon that He desires to set free. The good work that He meant to do by its destruction is not accomplished until out over its ruins there has come the power of good and consecrated life which it has been holding in

captivity, and which its demolition ought to set free for some useful and effective work.

This truth is very true about the work of Christ, the Saviour, and it ought to remind us of what is the real meaning of that work. Christ destroys sin. Sometimes He blasts it as with a thunderbolt by His judgments. Sometimes he melts it away as by sunshine, with His forgiveness. In either case we need to know that the real, final purpose of His treatment of a soul is not the freeing of it from the power of sin; it is the setting at liberty and bringing into vigorous and triumphant action the power of holiness which is the real, essential power of the human soul. Only when at last the liberated captive, realizing the wonderful and unexpected joy of his freedom, gathers up his strength, straightens his cramped limbs, fills his lungs with the new air of liberty, and starts on the long journey across the rivers and hills and streams to Jerusalem; only when the soul, forgiven, becomes possessed with the passion for positive holiness and sets forth on the long, glorious, toilsome journey through every difficulty and temptation to the higher life where it shall be holy with God's holiness forever,—only then is the work of Christ in that soul complete, and He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

But our verse suggests that the prisoner himself needs to be reminded of the purpose of his freedom. The picture would not be complete if it failed to represent that fact which reappears in every exile of the human soul, in every captivity of it under corrupt and despotic circumstances,—the fact that the soul reconciles itself to the circumstances which are its tyrants, and has to be urged, and sometimes almost driven, to leave their dominion when their despotic power has been broken. No doubt the mass of Jews lived on contented in their exile. They had fitted themselves to their captivity. Only here and there a Daniel lived in perpetual longing and unceasing prayer. So everywhere the mass of men are busy with the hour's interests. Only here and there a soul lives in the passion of the things unseen. And yet the spiritual and immortal life is the true home-land of them all.

Another application of our truth is illustrated in the matter of men's usefulness or uselessness. The world is full of useless men; or of men who, if useful at all, are only so as disciplines and trials to their brethren. They believe themselves to be restrained from usefulness by some imprisoning conditions peculiar to their lot in life. "Somebody ought to help the poor, but what can I do about it? I am

poor myself, just able to worry my way through life." "Somebody ought to teach the ignorant, but I am too ignorant myself." "Somebody ought to seek out the degraded and the outcast, but I have been born and bred in this fashionable luxury, and am cursed with a fastidiousness which is not my fault." It is the old story, "one to his farm, and another to his merchandise."

And then what comes? God shatters the walls of the useless man's excuse, and summons him to a man's true place in the world. Sometimes he changes the man's condition. Sometimes, without changing his condition, He destroys the man's conception of the disabilities of his position. It is not wealth, but a man's notion about wealth that is the man's real tyrant. God somehow shatters that false notion, and the man is free. God opens to him the broad fields of a life where he can help his fellowmen. He cries to him: "There is where you belong. Go away; do not stand still. Let Jerusalem come into your mind."

The same call to the exile comes whenever this Babylon of the outer life is shattered. The strong man, smitten down by sickness, prays. The bankrupt turns the pages of his unfamiliar Bible. The voyager in the storm at sea thinks of the God that

he has long forgotten on land. The house emptied by a terrible bereavement seems to be filled with an invisible Presence. And no less the joyous times—the birth, the wedding, the festival—break the even surface of the life; and the psalm and prayer burst forth from unaccustomed lips. It is easy to talk about it as excitement or hypocrisy; but it is vastly more than that; it is the exile—for only a moment, perhaps, but genuinely and truly—hearing through an instant's breakage in his Babylon the call from his native country, remembering the Lord afar off, and letting Jerusalem come into his mind.

Here is the final truth concerning the whole matter. There will come some great release of the spiritual faculty at death, perhaps. And there will come release, it may be, in some of the shocks and changes of condition which are sure to come in life. Some hour of great joy or sorrow will waken the sleeping soul and bid it live. But the soul need not wait for those. Better than the chances which lie far off is the chance that lies deep down under its feet. Now, at any moment, the soul may see through its prison, and enter into freedom even while the chains of its conditions are still upon it. It may live in Jerusalem even while it lives in Babylon.

This was just what Jesus Christ came to do for us all, to show us how it is possible for a man to live in perfect spiritual freedom even while the bondages of the earth are upon him. Christ was free in the very heart of Babylon because He obeyed God. He carried His Jerusalem with Him. If we enter into His obedience, we shall surely share His liberty. If the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed.

Wronging no man, Lord, nor Thee
Vexing, I do pray to be
In my soul, my body, free.

Free to freely leave behind
Worser things, howe'er enshrined,
When the better things I find;

So that pain may peace enhance,
And through every change and chance
I upon myself advance.

Free us, O Lord our God, from every bondage that hinders us in serving Thee, that we may serve Thee more eagerly and joyfully in every freedom that Thou dost graciously give us; through Jesus Christ.—Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent.

And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.—JAMES i., 15.

ST. JAMES declares the nature of sin by the consequences of sin. He is not merely saying that sin will be punished with death; he is saying, much more profoundly, that sin hath death within itself. On this second Sunday in Lent, let us try to see what he means.

Two trees grow side by side in the forest. The sap in the veins of one is food and medicine; the sap in the other's veins is poison for human life. Two men walk side by side down the street. One of them, bright, hopeful, intelligent, earnest, makes men live more fully wherever he goes; the other, cynical, morose, stupid, kills out life wherever his pestilential presence reaches. Life and death, food and poison—everywhere they are side by side. A subtle analysis may detect the food quality in the food, and the poison quality in the poison; but most men will know that food is food simply because

it nourishes, and poison is poison simply because it kills.

St. James says that sin belongs to the latter dreadful class. Sin does not nourish, strengthen, and build up; sin poisons, weakens, and pulls down. And so he really declares two things about it: first, that it is unnatural and an intruder; and, second, that it is the enemy of all the natural processes of life. If holiness is man's natural and true condition, then sin is man's false and unnatural condition. If holiness is strength, sin is weakness. Of everything that is holiness, sin is just the opposite and negative.

The history of a sin, then, where does it begin? Far back we must go, even to the very power of sinning which is in our human freewill. As the song of Shelley or the drama of Shakespeare lies folded in the lyric or dramatic possibilities of the unconscious infancy—a formless, unrecognized, unconscious thing, but still a real thing, without which the song or drama could never have been,—so with the sin of yesterday. You cannot tell its real history till you have gone back far behind its earliest temptation, and found the power of doing it involved in the very humanity of the man who did it. There is where all sins run back and find

their unity. The elegant, fastidious, transgression and the low, grovelling lust—trace them far enough back, and they all run together in that one great reservoir, the human heart, the human power of sin.

Now, the power of sin being there, the next stage in the sin's history is its passage into a desire. Here, first, in this passage of power into desire, the subjective and the objective meet. That which before had been within the heart now feels the touch of outside life; the power of sin which is within the nature is found out by the temptation which is outside the nature, in the world. . . . And so the second stage in the history of a sin is reached.

The next step is marked by a sharpness and promptness that these others have not had. The will may hesitate before it yields to the desire, but when it does yield it is a single act. You may surround it with all sorts of unreality. You may say it is a necessity. You may even try to make it seem a virtue; but in at the centre of all the cloud of half-delusions there lies one certain fact: The sin that was at first a power, and then was a desire, has gone on and is a resolution. It has grown into a strong youth, and has mastered the will.

And what comes next? The act, the deed itself.

As the growing young man comes of age, and has his manhood recognized of other men, so the growing sin comes into its majority, and seals itself with a deed, and all men see its wickedness.

And so the sin is done, done as the man is done who has come into his majority, but not finished, as the man is not finished at twenty-one, with all his growth to grow and all his influence to exercise waiting for him. Power, desire, will, deed—they are all there, but then only begins the sin's full-grown life. You grow familiar with it in your recollection. By and by the very perception that it is a sin begins to fail you. You begin to cheat yourself and call it other names, darkness for light, and light for darkness; evil for good, and good for evil. Your sin has killed your real life; for this disgraced, demoralized, blinded struggle or apathy into which it has brought you is not life, but death. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

And what then? Must every sin be finished? There is One who is Lord of man because He made man, and because He has occupied and redeemed to Himself our humanity by a perfect human life, and who is Lord of sin because He has met it in personal struggle and conquered it. Only He can interrupt a sin, so that it shall not be finished and

cannot bring forth death. At any point in its history He can step in, and can so change the nature that the power of sin shall not open into the desire of sin; He can so chasten the desire that it shall never dare to impose itself on the will and grow into a resolution; He can even lay his hand on a resolution, and demand of it that it shall leave undone the deed it has resolved upon. But even beyond this, even when the sin is done, even then He can hinder it from being finished. When preventing grace has failed, restoring grace may still be powerful. First comes forgiveness, which is not simply the taking off of penalties. The soul forgiven is put beyond the reach of punishment by being taken out of the power of sin. The two must go together.

And then the past sin, what is done with that? It cannot be forgotten; it cannot be as if it had never been. But when Christ touches it, all is changed. When He has once forgiven it, it is all filled with the assurance of His love. It remains in the life as a power of caution, of watchfulness, of trust, of gratitude. It has become vital instead of deadly. It brings forth life, the life of loving trust continually instead of death. It was on the wings of his sin forgiven that Simon Peter went through

his long struggle of obedient gratitude up to everlasting life.

May God do so with your sins! May Christ so step across their path, and make your gratitude for His forgiveness the power of a new, devoted, holy, unworldly, heavenly life, first here and afterwards in heaven!

'T is not enough to weep my sins;
'T is but one step to heaven;
When I am kind to others, then
I know myself forgiven.

O merciful Lord, grant that none of my sins be finished, but so repented of that Thou mayest put between my sin and Thy just wrath the mystery and merits of the Cross of Thy dear Son: For His sake.—Amen.

Monday after the Second Sunday.

The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.—JOHN xii., 29.

FOR almost every event it is possible to give what we may call a natural or a spiritual explanation. The first is impersonal; the second is always personal: it finds no final force except in will, and it is always finding its way back by some one of many paths to the supreme and central Will, and accounting for the world and humanity by God. The sun has its natural explanation in the laws under which it was made and by which it shines. Its spiritual explanation is in the Word of Him who said, "Let there be light"; in the intentions of Mercy, the Heart of Wisdom and Love. On the natural or on the spiritual explanation different men fasten their attention. One man says, "It thunders"; another says, "An angel speaks."

And it seems as if there were nothing which has such a controlling influence over the richness and

comfort of our existence as just this—the kind of explanations that we give to the events that are happening to us and around us all the time. The events in themselves are nothing, are valueless until we put a value into them. They are like the pressures and crowdings that we get in a great throng of people, which may mean nothing except that we are in a crowd, or may mean that a friend has found us out and wants to make us turn his way. And so life, for its best value, must depend upon whether there are indeed spiritual influences at work everywhere, and all that happens in nature is the utterance of the intentions and the character of God, and whether all that happens in history, great or small, is an announcement of eternal laws of spiritual reaction and deep purposes of spiritual education. If one can find all this in the world, then the world to him must be very rich indeed. He never can grow tired of it. The longer he lives in it, the more beautiful and interesting it must be to him.

And here, it seems to me, was the wonderful work of our Lord's Incarnation. Every pure and delicate soul that comes into this world and is conscious of the exquisite spiritual tissue of educations and compensations which is strung unseen under and through all this gross structure of material

things which meets our eyes,—every such soul, finding some deeper explanation for the common things of life, helps us, and makes the world more rich by some new unveiling of its mystery. But when Jesus Christ came, it was so much more than that! It was God made visible in the world; and that could not confine itself to the one, single body that He wore; the invisible divinity in everything, the spiritual purpose that was invisible in everything came forth into visibility wherever it entered into the circle of His life. A process then began which is to go on until it is complete. That is what St. Paul means when he pictures the whole creation as travailing in pain together, waiting for the adoption. That is to be the final triumph of Christ —the subjection of all things to Himself as everything becomes full of spiritual life, radiant with spiritual meaning, and capable of spiritual influences.

We need only to open the pages of the Gospels to see how this work of Christ's Incarnation began while He was here on earth. Men had been giving their own explanations of the events of life. At the touch of Jesus what new, more sacred meanings started up and showed their truth to men! His parables are all simply the deeper explanations of what men had not understood before, the finding

under the beautiful, familiar forms of daily use signs of a spiritual life forever flowing beneath this ordinary life of ours. His treatment of sickness and pain was always with reference to moral facts and purposes. To be sick meant, with Him, to be human, and to be human meant to be sinful and needy, and so the setting of a body free from sickness always had some mysterious connection with the spiritual miracle of redemption, the bringing back of ruined humanity to its perfect pattern.

But let us select one or two instances of the different explanations that men may give to the same event. Just as, on that old day in the courts of the Temple, some men listened and could hear nothing but a little different peal of the old, familiar thunder, while to other ears the voice that spoke out of the sky seemed altogether new and such as could have come only from supernatural lips, so, to one student, the life of Jesus of Nazareth has seemed to be only a little different reaction upon different circumstances and different tasks of this same familiar human nature, while to other ears He is Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God, a very exhibition of Deity in human life,—not merely the created and reflected deity which is in every man, and which at any moment burns out to

the surface,—but the creative and essential Deity which is God alone.

Take another instance: Death comes and makes itself a terrible, plain fact. With its awful witnesses it proves itself so that no man can doubt it. The dearest and the best is taken. To one man, what comes? Merely, disease has once more had its way. The feeble flame of life has gone out in a gust of fever. The wheels of accident or of fate, which have been rolling on for ages, have at last come to this life lying on their track, and have quietly crushed it out. But what is it to another who sees with different eyes? God has called, and one of His children has gone into the inner room of His immediate presence, to be with Him forever. The fence has broken down, and all that this heart has hoped for has been given to it; all that it hated and tried to escape from it has cast behind it; all that it longed to know has been spread wide before it. The earthly house of its tabernacle is dissolved, and it has entered into the building of God.

So different we find the explanations of this world! And the explanations in which we rest both test and educate our characters. The sound was heard from heaven, and one man said, "It is thunder"; another said, "An angel speaks." Neither was right. It

was God. But he who looked into the world of spirits for a cause was at least looking in the right direction, and was in the way to reach the perfect truth.

I plead with you to-day for a brave spiritual-mindedness. I plead with you to look deep for the deepest causes of life, to rest this world always on another, to give to every action its profoundest motive, to read in every discipline its profoundest lesson, not to be afraid of close, familiar dealing with spiritual truth, and always to redeem every human weakness and shallowness by putting under it the strength and infiniteness and constancy of God.

Oh for the eye that out beyond
The stars spies others gleaming,
That scans the Unbeheld as real,
The Seen as only seeming;
The eye that earthly blindness helps
To spiritual seeing,
And deep within the inmost finds
The richer, fuller being.

O Eternal Word, Revealer of the Father, Thou who art the Light that lighteneth every soul that cometh into the world, give me by Thy Spirit clear sight and understanding, that I may see and know God in all His works and orderings, Whom to see and know is everlasting life.—Amen.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday.

The armor of righteousness.—2 CORINTHIANS vi., 7.

EVERYWHERE men are loving and admiring strength. Everywhere the power to do something, to conquer some resistance, is what men are looking for and finding, and rejoicing in when it is found.

But St. Paul's idea of strength is a higher one, because he sees everywhere a resistance so much mightier than any against which they contend: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." And the spiritual foe must be met with spiritual strength. For that fight there is no strength that can serve a man except the simple strength of being personally good, no armor but the armor of righteousness. How, then, is a good man strong?

Now, the soul's primary fitnesses and relations are what we have to deal with when we are looking for some permanent ground for human happiness or

peace. If it be true that the human soul was made for goodness, and can be permanently happy in goodness; and was not made for sin, and cannot be permanently happy in sin; then every restoration of the soul to goodness is a return into a natural strength on which it can rely. Everything works strongly as it works in the line of its first design, its intention in its creation. The deeds which a man does in the direction of goodness, being done in the first and deepest direction of his nature, must be the strongest of his life, must contain the deepest force and promise the longest permanence.

There is another element of the strength of a righteous man which we might call the solidity of righteousness. Sometimes it is independence, sometimes it is courage, or power, or patience, or peace, that this element puts on for its outward utterance; but in general it is that sense which a man feels when he has done something which he knows is right that it goes deeper than his other acts, that it can stand alone. Our ordinary duty and policy stand leaning against each other. Neither has any deep foundation of its own. The rumor of the street is life or death to them. They are always on trial before the most fickle of courts. But when a man does an act of principle it is as if he had dug

down and laid his own foundation and built his walls solid on that. He is not indifferent to what people say, but it cannot make or unmake his strength. It is the difference of the gale to the man who stands on the shore and the man who floats on the sea. The gale may make the man on the shore shiver and hold his breath, it may blow the sand into his eyes and vex him in a hundred ways; but it sinks the poor fellow out at sea.

One more element in the strength of righteousness seems to come from the very foundation and moral government of the universe. Everybody who thinks at all becomes more and more thoroughly impressed with what we may call the double layers of life. There is an upper layer in which all sorts of tendencies are strangely mixed, where the currents run all kinds of ways. Deeper than this there is a great, general, steady movement of the whole universe towards right, towards duty, towards truth. The surface currents of civilization run as often backward as forward, yet, in the great whole, civilization advances. A thousand times this deep conviction that the fundamental movement of all things, from the stars circling in their orbits to the nations fulfilling their careers, is towards goodness, gives a cool, strong citadel to flee to out of the hot

distraction of our ordinary unmoral lives. Every act of duty, everything that we do because it is right to do it, pierces down, as it were, and carries us from the fickle surface to the strong depth of life, and puts us in living harmony with the whole universe, which at its bottom and by its oldest, deepest impulse is struggling towards righteousness.

As we enumerate these elements of the strength of righteousness, we must be always referring to God, whose strength is perfect because of His perfect righteousness. When we talk of men, we separate goodness and strength; the best evidence that the separation is unnatural is the way in which we always fasten them together in our thought of God. Whatever dreams we may have had of a satisfactory strength that has no moral character are all dissipated the moment that the perfect Being is opened to us, as the clouds scatter when the sun looks out.

And this is not true merely of the eternal nature of God, it was manifested in the life of the Emmanuel Christ. In Him the joy and naturalness of being good, the security and solidity of righteousness, and the felt harmony with the goodness that underlies and rules the world—these things which men dream of and catch glimpses of—were perfect.

It was this, and not merely His wondrous miracles,—or rather it was this, made superbly and supremely glorious in His miracles,—which set that patient, gentle, victorious Life upon the hill-top where the sunlight of all the world's newest and best hopes first strikes, to be Itself the perfect miracle, the highest dream of human strength perfectly realized.

How the world needs strong men! And in what various ways she tries to make them! Everywhere there is the clangor of the forges where she is making armor for her children. All of us have got some armor, some shield, that we are wearing or holding up to make us strong. But we are not strong; we are very weak. On every side trouble pierces us; we are wounded every day. We may be too proud to own it, but we are defeated by nature, by the world, by our worse selves. Our armor is not strong.

What shall we take? The armor of righteousness. The strength of doing right out of gratitude to the Saviour. This is His promise: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also."

Faith is a grasping of Almighty Power,
The hand of man laid on the arm of God,
The grand and blessèd hour

In which the things impossible to me
Become the possible, O Lord, through Thee.

O God, the Strength of the faithful, graciously hear my prayer, that whereas my human weakness by itself is prone to fall, I may ever be supported by Thee to stand upright, and steadfastly to fight the good fight of Faith and Right unto my life's end; through Jesus Christ.—Amen.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday.

The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.—Rev. xxi., 16.

There are three directions of human life to which we may fitly give these three names—length and breadth and height. The length of a life, in this meaning of it, is not its duration. It is rather the reaching on and out of a man in the line of activity and thought and self-development, which is indicated and prophesied by the character which is natural within him, by the special ambitions which spring up out of his special powers. It is the push of a life towards its own personal ends.

The breadth of a life, on the other hand, is its outreach laterally, if we may say so. It is the constant diffusive tendency which is always drawing a man outward into sympathy with other men. When that tendency of a man's character is consciously and deliberately acknowledged, and a man comes to value his own personal career because of the way in

which it relates him to his brethren and the help which it permits him to offer them,—then his life has distinctly begun to open itself in this new direction, and to its length it has added breadth.

And the height of a life is its reach upward towards God; its sense of childhood; its consciousness of the Divine Life over it, with which it tries to live in love, communion, and obedience. . . . The reaching of mankind towards God! Evidently, in order that that may become a true dimension of a man's life, it must not be a special action. It must be something which pervades all that he says and does. It must not be one solitary column, set on one holy spot of the nature. It must be a movement of the whole nature upward. . . . The height of life, its reach towards God, must be coextensive with the length of life, or its reach towards its personal ambition, and the breadth of life, or its reach towards the sympathy of other lives. It is when a man begins to know the ambition of his life not simply as the choice of his own will, but as the wise assignment of God's love; and to know his relation to his brethren not simply as the result of his own impulsive affections, but as the seeking of his soul for these souls because they all belong to the great Father-soul;—it is then that life for man

begins to lift itself all over, and to grow towards completion upward through all its length and breadth.

The life which has only length, only intensity of ambition, is narrow. The life that has length and breadth, intense ambition and broad humanity, is thin. It is like a great, flat plain of which one wearies, and which sooner or later wearies of itself. The life which to its length and breadth adds height, which to its personal ambition and its sympathy with man adds the love and obedience of God, completes itself into the cube of the Eternal City, and is the life complete.

Think for a moment of the life of the great apostle, the manly, many-sided Paul. "I press towards the mark for the prize of my high calling," he writes to the Philippians. That is the length of life for him. "I will gladly spend and be spent for you," he writes to the Corinthians. There is the breadth of life for him. "God hath raised us up and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," he writes to the Ephesians. There is the height of life for him. You can add nothing to these three dimensions when you try to account to yourself for the impression of completeness which comes to you out of his simple, lofty story.

We need not stop with him: look at the Lord of St. Paul. See how in Christ the same symmetrical manhood shines yet more complete. See what intense ambition to complete His work, what tender sympathy with every struggling brother by his side, and at the same time what a perpetual dependence on His Father, is in Him. "For this cause came I into the world"; "For their sakes I sanctify myself"; "Now, O Father, glorify Thou me":—leave either of those out, and you have not the perfect Christ, not the entire symmetry of manhood.

I hope that we are all striving and praying now that we may come to some such symmetrical completeness. Do not dare to live without some clear intention toward which your living shall be bent. Mean to be something with all your might. Do not add act to act and day to day in perfect thoughtlessness, never asking yourself whither the growing line is leading.

But at the same time do not dare to be so absorbed in your own life, so wrapped up in listening to the sound of your own hurrying wheels, that all this vast, pathetic music, made up of the mingled joy and sorrow of your fellow-men, shall not find out your heart and claim it, and make you rejoice to give yourself for them.

And yet, all the while, keep the upward windows open. Do not think that a child of God can worthily work out his career, or worthily serve God's other children, unless he does both in the love and fear of God their Father. Be sure that ambition and charity will both grow mean unless they are both inspired and exalted by religion.

Energy, love, and faith, those make the perfect man. And Christ, who is the perfectness of all of them, gives them all three to any man who gives up himself to Him.

Then life is to wake, not sleep;
Rise, and not rest; but press
From earth's level, where blindly creep
Things perfected more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep.

Almighty and ever-living God, in whom all live; grant me to cherish Thy life in my soul, and to labor to make others blessed in union with Thy life, and in the enjoyment of Thy love, through Jesus Christ.—Amen.

Thursday after the Second Sunday.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.—JOHN XV., 22.

NONE of us can doubt that Jesus Christ always had a deep and tender pity for the men whom He rebuked most strongly for their sins. And there is several times the suggestion of an element in His sorrow for the sinners He rebuked which is very touching. It is the feeling that He is the source of their responsibility and the occasion of their sins, and therefore of all the suffering that must come out of it. If He had not told them what was right, if He had not given them the chance of a higher life, then this low and false life that they were living would not have been a sin for them. . . . As He went about He must have seen, as it were, a deepening of every color, the brightening of what was bright, the darkening of what was dark, wherever His shadow fell. Goodness shone with an unknown lustre and sin put on a darker blackness, as

He saw in countless instances; and it must have touched Him most keenly and burdened very heavily the tender soul of the Saviour.

And something of the same burden, certainly, must rest upon the heart of every one to whom it is given to continue and share in the work of Jesus Christ. Every parent, every teacher, every editor, every leader and maker of opinion, must be full of what Christ was full of—a profound sense that he must not give up trying to help his brethren because he cannot help them to more good without exposing them to more evil. He who leads a nation out of barbarism into civilization leads it into the dangers of civilization as well as into its privileges. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt he led them into pride and idolatry as well as out of slavery. So closely are the two bound together, so impossible it is to do a man good without his being perfectly able to turn the good into evil! It is the necessary danger of all privilege.

Let us turn from the offerer of the privilege to the man to whom the privilege is offered. There is not one who has not some time turned a deaf ear to some voice of God, because he was not ready to meet it with a frank obedience, and fancied that he was escaping its responsibilities if he stood with his

fingers in his ears and made believe that he did not hear it. . . .

And it is all so useless, so hopeless! Everywhere the God who fills the universe, and who is longing to have your soul, meets you and faces you, and makes you hear Him. He fills the whole earth with His voices. Out of your books, your play, your company, out of all nature, out of all life, He speaks. His voice lurks for you under the voices of your children; His face breaks in upon you out of the darkness of the night. He will be seen. He will be heard. He offers you everywhere that self-knowledge, that sense of His love, that hope of reconcilement, which you must meet at last, and take deliberately or reject deliberately. So unsparing, so unresting, is that love of God out of which come all the mighty, double possibilities of the life of man.

There is another thought which results from this idea that every offer of a higher life is likewise the offer of a lower life, and that is the absolute personality of every man's sin. Your sin is yours. With it in its distinctness you must stand before God. It takes its character from you, and from all your previous relationship to Him. And since the relation of natures to each other is infinitely various,

and it is possible to conceive that no other human nature ever stood in all respects in precisely the same relationship to God in which yours stood when you did your sin of yesterday; it is also possible to conceive that that sin of yesterday was different from any other sin that has ever been committed in the universe. It is a solemn thought. If we do not apply it to single sins, we must hold that each one of us as a sinner stands alone, fronts God with an unexampled sort of obstinacy, disappoints God with a certain sort of coldness, which He sees in us alone. Such a truth seems to be inextricably bound up with the separateness of a personality.

Sin, then, the thing which God hates, the thing which God will punish, is the result of our special personal condition, the violation of our special personal duty. God has shown you some truth which you ought to believe. He has set you some task which He wants you to do. He has designed some special type of holiness which it is His wish that you should attain. If He had not so spoken to you, you could have had no sin. Sin, for you, is not the not being a St. John or a St. Paul, but the not being yourself in that perfect image of yourself which God sees to be possible. If we could only get rid of the abstractness of sin, and come down to

its personality; if we could only know that God's word to us is spoken in the ordinary duties of our life, in the tasks of the family and of society, of schoolkeeping and housekeeping and shopkeeping, that those tasks make our chance of sin, and so not to do them, or to do them so meanly and carelessly and worldlily that they do not cultivate in us the godliness that they were meant to cultivate, and that this is sin for us,—if we knew this, how real our sin would be!

We live rich lives. In social privileges, in happy domestic life, in the advantages of education, in the long use of the Bible, and in familiarity with the Gospel our lives are very rich indeed. God meant our lives to be rich, and not meagre; or, if He makes them meagre, it is that He may enrich them more fully. But, remember! every new item of this richness is a new word of God to us; and every new word of His makes possible a new sin. It is a universal, necessary law. There can no privilege come to a man that does not make it possible for him in some new way, some new degree, to be a wickeder man than before.

Shall we not pray, then, that God will help us to hear every word of His, even though the hearing open to us the danger of new sin?—since His grace

is strong enough to keep us from the sin, and to lead us through the danger into that world whose glory will be that we shall enjoy there the highest privilege without a fear, because there privilege will bring no risk.

I set my will His word to hear
With comprehending mind ;
Nor carelessness, nor pride, nor fear,
My heart or brain shall bind
To rob me of the grace and cheer
My soul was meant to find.

O Lord, grant that every word of Thine may be a lantern to my feet and a light unto my path, enabling me to walk securely in any way where Thou wouldest have me to go, and to use every privilege to Thy glory : For Christ's sake.—Amen.

Friday after the Second Sunday.

And for a helmet the hope of salvation.—1 THESS. v., 8.

THE desire of safety may be the lowest or the highest emotion of our nature. To one man safety means the escape from pain and trouble, and the desire of safety is mere fear of discomfort. To another man safety means that condition of things in which he can live his best life and do his best work. It is the living of that life, the doing of that work, which he desires when he desires safety. So everywhere safety sought as a luxury is disgraceful; safety taught as a condition of life and growth is full of dignity.

The truth seems to be that the desire of safety teaches and trains us nobly only when it has some purpose greater than itself in view. It must not be safety that we desire, but the life and work that safety makes possible. Five hundred years ago, a learned and lovely woman, Marcella Andrew, taught in the University of Bologna; but whenever she

took her father's place in the professor's chair and lectured upon law, she sat behind a curtain to prevent her beauty from distracting her hearers' minds. So Safety sits behind her purposes, and sends her teachings and inspirations from thence, that it may not be she, but her lessons and inspirations that we desire and attain.

St. Paul says in his figure, "For a helmet the hope of salvation." How is it that hope gives a man safety? Take the simplest of all illustrations. Put a man in a dungeon, build up the walls thick around him, lock up the heavy doors, and leave him there. What troops of dangers you leave him with!— idleness, dread, despair, self-disgust, madness. What spell can you throw around the poor wretch that will make him able to defy haunting fiends and morbid dreams? There is but one protection: give him hope, and the man is safe. The demoralization of the prison has lost its power. He sets his soul against the temptations of sullen, brooding idleness. He says to his brain: "You must be steady. You must not reel. I shall want you at your best some day." His solitude is invaded and filled by the forms and voices of the things and men that, on his day of freedom, he will have to do with. Month after month, year after

year, go by; but as long as the hope of release is left to him, the evil spirits who attack him will find that they have no power.

So it is the prospect, the hope, of the eternal life that make the best safety of this life. The man who is anticipating heaven is armed not only against the troubles, but the sins of earth. The sinfulness of life is bound up everywhere with the littleness, the temporariness of life. It is not strange that He who brought "life and immortality to light" should be the same who was called Jesus because He should "save His people from their sins."

In every state of sin and trial and imperfectness we are saved from its worst effects if we are confidently hoping,—and never lose sight of our hope,—to escape from it some day. The future deliverance is already a present security. The strength which is to release us some day is already protecting us by the power of that promise of release. The mercy of the future is already the safety of the present. All this is true because time is nothing but a mere mode of our thinking. Present and past and future are nothing, mean nothing to God. We say God is going to give us a crown some day in heaven; but we cannot be sure of that without the crown already pressing on our brows. Can we imagine Jesus

Christ living in gloom and misery, and yet sure that the time was at hand when He should be glorified with His Father, perfectly and forever? That future glory was already His. He walked in it all through His life of suffering. He hung in it upon His cross. He was safe, He was saved, because of the perfect sureness, the certain hope of salvation from which He never parted for a moment.

Ah, our religion is something that belongs so to the surface! "Some day I shall be saved," we say; "some day He who has died for me and risen again, will take possession of His kingdom, and then I shall be with Him." It is all "shall" and "will"; and here meanwhile we are tossed about by distresses and temptations, miserable in our sins. Where is our present strength? Where is the redemption that shall save us *now?*

My dear friends, Christ our Lord means that everything that we are to have of joy, and peace, and Him should be ours in its power and its blessing now. Only remember that according to the quality of your hope will be the quality of the anticipatory safety that it gives you. If you hope only for a redemption from pain, you will be preserved from sinking under pain. If you hope only for salvation from punishment, that hope will only

rescue you from present fear. But if you hope with the high and certain hope of the Christian that some day you shall be saved from sin, that glorious hope shall be in you the power of purity. Already you shall conquer your temptation of to-day by the anticipation of the strength that is to be yours in the City of God.

May that hope of salvation be your helmet! May you be strong in every moment of time with all the anticipated and concentrated strength of eternity!

For not to man on earth is given
The ripe fulfilment of desire;
Desire of heaven itself is heaven,
Unless the passion faint and tire:
So upward still, from hope to hope,
From faith to faith the soul ascends;—
And who has scaled the eternal cope
Where that sublime accession ends?

O Thou Hope of all the ends of the earth, Thou in whom our fathers hoped and were not confounded, truly my hope is even in Thee! Grant me this hope all the days of my life, and that at last my hope shall be crowned with fruition in Thy heavenly Kingdom; which I dare ask only for the sake of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.—Amen.

Saturday after the Second Sunday.

That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."—TITUS iii., 8.

LEAVE out the drones who do not work at all, and you may divide the world into the men who work with and the men who work without the knowledge and acknowledgment of principle. One man is always trying to do things without knowing how they ought to be done; another is always studying the ways of doing things, but doing nothing. Bad as the first is, the last is worse. Better faithless work than unworking faith, if we must choose. But both are bad compared with the work which, being full of faith, understands itself and comes to the best results.

A man's life seems like a piece of architecture. Between the pillars and the walls that they support there must be true proportion, or there can be no true pleasure in seeing them. If the walls and roof be vast and heavy, and the columns that support

them be thin and unsubstantial, there may be a sort of wonder at the fantastic effect, but the true eye turns away pained and dissatisfied. On the other hand, if great, majestic stone columns, when your sight follows them up to their summits, are found to support only a filigree roof of wood, the majesty of the columns will not satisfy you. Only when the great pillars support a roof worthy of their strength, and the heavy roof rests on columns that are worthy to support it, only then is a pure, healthy taste satisfied, and the eye passes back and forth with calm and restful pleasure from arch to column and from column to arch.

Is it not so with the moral impulses, the faiths of men on one side, and their actions on the other? Let a great faith set on its solid shaft the crowning glory of a great action, and let a great action look down and worthily support itself on a great faith, and then the architecture of the life is perfect. Men love to look at it. It fills their hearts with its poise and peace and strength.

The things that we need to escape from in this world—we who are set here both to think and act—are visionariness of thought and shallowness of action. Is it not clear, is it not unspeakably important, to know that we can be rescued from both

of these only by finding and always keeping the sacred relationship between faith and works? Never tolerate a belief, an idea, without sending it out to its true action; so shall your faith be kept from visionariness. Try to do every act from its deepest motive, do it from heart and mind, not only from the finger-ends. Ask of everything you do, "Why should I do this?" and do not be satisfied till you have got down to where the lowest stone of your foundation rests upon the granite of some eternal principle. So in your life you shall weld together those two worlds which God made for one another, and which men have so often dared to put asunder —faith and works.

St. Paul saw many men believing in God, yet not careful to maintain good works. He saw that till their faith aimed at duty, it was in danger of dying out and running wild. The ship that was going nowhither was the plaything of every storm. The sobering, steadying power of faith must always be duty. There is where ideas come to the blessed test of facts. The doctrine will be sobered by the duty it is set to do. The column will be steadied by the weight that rests upon it.

There is one real, essential connection between Christian belief and righteousness of life which we

want to see constantly asserted. It is along the line of personal gratitude. What is the Christian belief? It is not merely a faith that there is a Christ, that there is a God; it is a willing and delighted acceptance of the truth about God which Christ makes sure to us. That God is love; that though we sin He is all ready to forgive us; that when we fall He is full of sorrow and anxious to lift us up; that there is nothing He will not do, nothing that He will spare, not even terrible suffering, to save us,—that is a Christian belief.

Has not that something to do with a good life? Suppose that you believe that, suppose that your heart is full of it,—are you no more anxious than you were before to do what that loving God wants you to do? Has His will no new, rich sacredness? Are the duties of life still hard, cold laws demanding your obedience? Are they not taken into His warm hands, and do they not blossom out into blessed and beautiful opportunities of showing how you thank Him for His love? The old tasks present themselves with changed faces, and you do them not by compulsion,—certainly not as repayment for His goodness, but simply as utterances of your grateful love.

Believers in God, do not be satisfied with any

faith, however glad and enthusiastic, that is not clenched and fastened with a righteous action. Save your religion from vague, sentimental feebleness by crowning it with work. Be your own judges. Ask yourselves unsparingly: What am I *doing* for Him whom I say that I love? Where is the active goodness that ought to flow out of my glorious faith?

> Therefore love and believe; for works will follow spontaneous,
> Even as day does the sun; the right from the good is an offspring,
> Love in a bodily shape; and Christian works are no more than
> Animate love and faith, as flowers are the animate spring-tide.

O Gracious Lord, make me strong in faith, and also in zeal and hope, that I may stir up Thy power in me, and ever gain new grace to will and to do Thy will more perfectly. I ask it for Jesus Christ's sake.—Amen.

Third Sunday in Lent.

Thy mercies are new every morning.—LAM. iii., 23.
I have called you friends.—JOHN xv., 15.

UNDER some name or other, freshness is what we are continually seeking. Life seems stale, and we are always pouring into it something to try to make it effervesce and seem as full of variety as it did once. Yesterday was good enough, perhaps, but we do not want yesterday again to-day. Business, society, culture, enterprise, travel, gossip,—this endless alternation of the outward circumstances of our lives,—a very large part of it means really nothing but this longing for freshness. It keeps a movement in the world which, no doubt, is healthy, but how it fails of what it tries to do! We who do these different things are the same persons who did the old things, and we come at last to the depressing knowledge that it is ourselves, and not our occupations, that we are so weary of.

Jeremiah's words, "Thy mercies are new every

morning," must have something to do in a case like ours. We cannot doubt that, like a true Jew, when he spoke of God's ever-new mercies, he was thinking first of the external mercies that bore witness every morning of the love of God for His children. He was thinking of the constant renewal of health, the hourly growth of harvests, the continual care of Jehovah for the chosen people, that made the nation's most silent history a poem in the patriot's ears,—of all these things certainly, but certainly also of something deeper than all these, of the way in which God Himself, who to the spiritual nature is always His own best mercy, was forever coming to him with the freshness of a new approach, and making his life new with the newness of the everlasting life, saving it from the staleness of mortality. It is the perpetual newness of the religious experience which must have most stirred his soul, and made it open into this unexpected flower of gratitude. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul"; and the next clause sings, "therefore will I hope in Him."

One of the higher forces that preserve the freshness of human life, that keep the color and spring and buoyancy in a life up to the very end, is a strong personal friendship. Friendship is a rela-

tionship with character, a taking and giving of all the infinite variety of suggestion, incitement, consolation, thought, and emotion that character alone can give to and take from character. He who rises every morning to meet anew the friend he lives for and lives in, and to see his life catch some new seriousness or exquisiteness of color as it enters into some new relation of need and supply with that beloved life,—he is the man whose freshness never withers, whose "mercies are new every morning."

To be a Christian is to love, to serve, to imitate Jesus the Christ,—not merely to remember a departed Teacher and to try to remember His commandments, but to live with a living Friend, to gather out of His present life present warnings and inspirations, to let Him guide us in all the little and great doings of our lives. "I have called you friends," He says. "Lo, I am with you always." Personal friendship with Him is the soul of the Christian faith. It *is* the Christian faith. And the soul which, in its dealing with Christianity, has laid hold of this its most essential character, and has found its religion most purely and most consciously in the personal service of Christ, is the soul to which its religion is the source of never-failing freshness, the soul which has reached the deepest and the

fullest fountain of refreshment that the human soul can know.

A religion of commandments grows burdensome. A religion of ceremonials grows wearisome. A religion of personal love is ever buoyant with the spring and variety of personal character. . . . Can you not see a special freshness and exuberance and simplicity of joy, a cordial welcoming of every new day as a new blessing in the life of the simplest and most childlike Christians, whose religion begins and ends in this: "I love Christ and He loves me; and I can please Him if I am pure and true and good; and so I will try to be with all my might and His." The great ministry of freshness to the stale lives of men is the Holy Spirit, whose work is to take of the things of Christ and show them to us.

Think how the lives of the Apostles must have been changed in regard to their freshness, from the time that they knew Christ! Many and many an evening Peter and James and John must have rocked in their boat on the lake, watching the sun sink below the hills that lay behind Capernaum, and wondered whether it would always rise on days as monotonous as these that they were living. But from the time that they looked up from the nets that they were mending, at the sound of the

strange, sweet, authoritative voice that called them, and left their nets and followed the Stranger, we are sure that such wonderment was gone. They began to find life all new. Life and death both became to them full of those deep, pregnant meanings that are always thrilling us as we read the New Testament. They began to live eternal life, as they loved to call it, by which they meant not merely life that is to last forever—which is sometimes all that we mean by it—but life that, in every moment of it, was fresh and deep and vital with the Divine companionship of Christ. "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." The personal friendship had transfigured their dull routines and filled their mortal life with the fire of immortality.

The divineness of Christianity is testified by nothing more than by its renewal, not once but again and again, of the variety, the novelty, the spring of life. What did Christ say to the Pharisee, with his stale, weary existence?—"Ye must be born again." What did St. John mean when he said of Jesus Christ that "in Him was life"? What do we Christians mean when, Sunday after Sunday, we exhort one another, "Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song"?

Is your life thus new with our inspiring faith continually? Is there such a spring of inexhaustible freshness in the truth and service of the Lord Jesus Christ? Then your life can never grow flat or dull, but always must be fresh and full of interest and vital to the last.

> Thrice happy is the man who doth obey
> The Lord of love through love; . . .
> And who, by daily use of blessings, gives
> Thanks for the daily blessings he receives.

O Blessed Lord, our Saviour, Elder Brother, and Friend, may Thy praise never cease out of my mouth, nor the abundance of Thy benefits depart from my heart: For all of which, glory be to Thee forever and ever.—Amen.

Monday after the Third Sunday.

Thy mercies are new every morning.—LAM. iii., 23.
My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.—JOHN v., 17.

ANOTHER element of constantly fresh life is plentiful work. The effect of work, if it have any real hold upon us, is to destroy self-consciousness, and how blessed that is! We get to thinking about ourselves, to thinking how long life is and how dull it looks as it stretches out before us. We get to feebly pitying ourselves, and grow weak by our own pity. Each day seems only reduplicating the tiresome history of the day before, till some day some blessed calamity sends us work to do. Perhaps we have to go to work for our living as well as just to live. At once life is another thing. We forget ourselves and are full of interest in the lives around us, through which we are pulling and driving this laboring life of ours.

I do not believe that the captain and the working crew of a ship at sea feel the monotonousness of the time as it weighs upon their idle passengers. To them each morning brings its new winds to sail by,

and its new perils to escape from; each hour is rich with responsibility and work. It is the sharp, full days when, as the man says, he has "not time to turn round," in which he ceases to want to turn idly on his pivot and goes straight forward to some purpose, and forgets that life is dull. Every morning his work is at the door, calling to him as if it, too, were a living friend, to come and take its hand and follow it to happiness. Where is the chance for him to grow weary?

Christianity gives zest and freshness to life by furnishing it with plentiful work. Is there one of us that does not feel that every little stroke of work that he has consented to do for his Lord has come back into his life with a reflow of fresh delight in living that was a thousand times its reward? . . . I speak only of the work you really did for Him. The other work, the help you gave or the lesson you taught only for yourself, because your position as a Church member demanded it, because you had a vague idea that your soul could not be saved unless you did some feeble, conventional religious work,—all that was weariness itself; and life seemed more tiresome than ever when you went out from your heartless toil.

But work that we really do for God—and, thank God! He has filled His world with chances of it—

brings us near to Him, and makes our friendship with Him more complete, and brings refreshment into our weary lives. "Thy mercies are new every morning." Yes: for every morning this great, noisy world, crowded with sin and poverty and sorrow, wakes from its uneasy slumber and cries out to us for help. Each morning new want and vice are fresh and flagrant, and each morning we may do something for Christ in His brethren; and, when we come to die we may wonder whether, in a world where vice and want are not, there can be any such chances of laboring for Christ as have made us perpetually happy here.

If we want an illustration of this, we need look no lower than to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In the profoundest reverence let us believe that the weariness of the Saviour, when He was here upon earth, was again and again consoled and lightened by the work for the Father that He loved to do. Was not that what He meant when He said that His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him? When He was tired and sat by Jacob's well, was it a new fatigue or a great refreshment to open the fountain of the water of life to the poor woman? Why did He sweep aside the officious thoughtfulness of His disciples to get at the children that needed

His blessing and the blind man who needed sight? Was it not that He wanted the joy of helping them? When His life was heavy, He lightened it with work. And so He lived a human life here, ever fresh with the constant communion of Divinity. "My father worketh hitherto, and I work";—that was the channel of the intercommunion of their One Life.

Do you not see that, since we also are permitted to work with God, we, too, may live in fresh and vital union with Him which shall be an echo of the Christhood, of that perfect and ineffable union in which He and His Father were One? Not only for the little that it will do for the world, but for the great need we have of it ourselves, may we be more faithful, zealous workers with God.

To do for others in some sort
  What Thou hast done for me,
Since in such work Thy saints have found
  A closer walk with Thee,—
This will my Father glorify,
  This happiness will bring;
For, serving others, I shall find
  The way to serve my King.

Give me, O Lord, what work Thou seest fit, and fit me for what Thou givest. Bless it to good, to the fulness of which it is capable; and let me thank Thee for it with joy in the end: Through Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday.

Faith without works is dead, being alone.—JAMES ii., 17.

TO believe in God is not simply to hold any facts about God, however sacred. It is to enter into personal union with Him, to make His life our life, to become His and to make Him ours. It is to become what He is by the assimilation of love. But good works stand to God's nature in the closest and most essential relation. He does righteous things because He is Righteousness, and loving things because He is Love, and true things because He is Truth. If, then, there can be in us such a belief in Him as shall make our nature like His nature, then from our nature good works shall flow just as they flow from His. Our life, turned into His life, shall utter itself as His does in the language of holiness. We shall grow like Him by belief, and just as He cannot be weak our new life will utter itself in strength; just as He must do kindness, we shall feel the same deep, supreme compulsion.

No longer will the Christ-like soul need to force itself to goodness; no longer must it trample its inclinations under foot, but its new inclinations shall be towards righteousness. When it is good as God is good, it will do good as He does good. That cannot come totally at once, but that is what must come at last; and when it has come, then he that has believed in God will be sure to do those good works which are the natural utterances of its new life.

There are many conscientious people whose conscience drags itself along with heavy weights on its ankles and its arms. They do what seems right with a bitter or a listless heart. Fervor, enthusiasm, spring—these cannot come into morality except from religion. To believe in God is something fiery and strong. The whole soul is exalted and aflame. It shares in the divinity that it believes in. And if you want your daily duties to be buoyant and triumphant, so that you shall keep your house, or teach your school, or sell your goods with fire in your heart and songs on your lips, it cannot be unless you can trace them all—your house, your school, your shop—back to their highest motive and do them all for God. Our duties must be like the colonies which in old times were sent out from

the mother-town of Athens. Each of them had to take some of the fire that burned on the altar at home, and from it only could be lighted the new altar-fire in the new distant colony. So let us try to kindle every remotest duty from the central altar-fire of faith in God, and then our whole life shall be filled with the one same quenchless fire.

Such was the life of Jesus Christ. Why is He bending here to touch this blind man's eyes and give him sight? Why is He so pitiful before this poor adulteress? Why is He so stern against these Pharisees' hypocrisy? Whence comes this patience and sublime composure of the Cross? It is His faith in God that makes them all. All for His Father, all in His Father, His works were done. Why should not we, too, be filled, as He was, out to the tip of every action, with the fire of a loving faith?

It certainly will be so when we are perfect. Heaven will be the life of Christ made universal. No least act of all the service that the saints shall do will flag because it has forgotten Him for whom it is done. No work of all the endless days shall ever slip down into drudgery and lose the inspiration of its motive; but everything will be lifted by its motive. Ministering to other worlds, helping and educating one another, serving in one part of the

universe or another,—the ease and glory of it all will be that it is all filled and fired with the enthusiasm that flows out from the Throne where He sits whom we love with all our might. Believing in Him, we shall surely do good works; faith will feed goodness throughout all eternity.

Works do follow us all unto God, there to stand and bear witness—
Not what they seemed, but what they were only. Blessed is he who
Hears their confession secure.

Almighty God, give me the increase of faith, I beseech Thee; and because Thou never deniest the aid of Thy loving-kindness to Thy faithful people, grant me to have such faith in Thee and so diligently to work for Thee, that my faith in Thy sight may never be reproved: For Jesus Christ's sake.—Amen.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday.

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are.—JAMES v., 17.

THE great men of Hebrew history had been magnified and glorified till they had passed out of the real grasp of the people. They had prayed, and God answered them. They had worked, and abundant fruits followed their working. "But that does not prove anything for us," the people said; "we are so different." "Nay," says St. James, "what they did, you can do. What they were, you can be. They were men subject to like passions as we are."

Here belongs the question of sainthoods, and what they mean. The Church has made her saints in multitudes. Gathering out of her history the holy men and women whose holiness has been pre-eminent, she has set them on her pedestals of canonization, and points her children to them on her memorial days. But all the value of their commemoration depends upon whether their sainthood is made a privilege and an exception, or a type and

pattern. To know that no achievement, no patience, no self-sacrifice, no love, which was in them is impossible in us; to see the image of our life's capacity in theirs,— that is the strong and helpful way to treat it. This is also the lesson that we need to learn of the sainthoods that are all about us. Thank God! they are not rare. As bright as any in the calendar are the lives of men and women in our city, in our households; who as they go about their work bear witness of themselves that they are very near to Christ.

You know your own continual imperfection. But let it never make you think that there is any height of Christian grace and holy living which is unattainable by you. . . . You stand off and look at some saintly character as a blinking candle looks up at the sun. But he was born like you. He is a man like you. He has the same passions that you have, the same to work with and the same to work against. You can be all that he is by the same strength that he has used. Believe this of every brightest and best life that you see, and then they shall help you onward to your best.

And have we not here the real truth and helpfulness of Christ's Incarnation? We rightly insist upon His separateness. He was not such as we are,

—that Word of God, who was with God, and who was God, who was made flesh and dwelt among us. But yet we must not lose ourselves so completely in this separateness as to forget that He *was* such as we are. Some people have said that Christ was only an Example to us, . . . and have made that Man to be no man, who walked with such human feet among the old vales and hills of Palestine, and touched all kinds of sorrow with such human hands, and spoke such human words to every sort of need. Ah, let no fear of losing the dear, great truth of the Divinity of Jesus Christ make you cloud to yourself His dear and true humanity. "He took our nature upon Him,"—that means so much!

"Then," you say, "it was a Man that fought the devil in the wilderness, and conquered him! Then it was a Man who was persecuted, vexed, tormented, year after year, by those narrow-headed, narrow-hearted Jews, and never cursed them! Then it was a Man whose life was drained by the thirsty needs of all those multitudes, and yet kept its freshness and richness to the last! Then it was a Man who died on the cross, a Man who rose out of the grave! Then all the courage and the patience and the helpfulness, the sacrifice even to death, and the resur-

rection from the dead are not outside of but within the capacity of our humanity, if Christ was really a Man; and I may follow Him where He goeth, and be holy as He is holy, and be with Him where He is!"

The strongest and most effective presentations of Christianity have always had in them this truth of the immense capacity of man. There was a time when men dwelt more than they now do on the present degradation of human nature. They told the story of the Fall. But the story of the Fall has at its heart the truth of man's capacity. Only a being capable of the Garden can be capable of such a Wilderness. And no man can be brought to see that he is really vile till he catches sight of his own ideal glory, or knows how far he is away from God till he has had some vision of himself close to God. Or if the helplessness of man is preached, that, too, is a proclamation of his capacity; for to be capable of God, to be so made that God can fill us with Himself by His Spirit, and make us strong with Himself,—that is the promise of infinity at once. Where is there any end of that capacity?

Lift up your eyes and look into the distance. You cannot see the end of these pathways which you are entering when you do one right thing; but,

looking ahead, you can see forms so far away that you can only be sure that they are the forms of men. But that is all you need,—to know that where they have gone you can go. What they have done, you can do. Let every great man, every good man, be your revelation and your prophecy. All round you there are men who have conquered the temptation with which you are struggling, and who call to you from the other side of the wall which you must climb. Above you, in the other life, are the men who have won the victory of this life, and have passed on to higher tasks.

By the manhood of them all, take courage and believe in the capacity of man.

In every form of the human
  Some hint of the Highest dwells;
And, scanning each living temple
  For the place where the veil is thin,
We may gather by beautiful glimpses
  The form of the God within.

O God, who didst, by the power of the Holy Spirit, effectually bring to us Thy Son in our own nature, fill our hearts with such love and gratitude that we may constantly endeavor to show Thee forth in our life and conversation, by the power of the same Holy Spirit. —Amen.

Thursday after the Third Sunday.

Elias was a man, . . . and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain.—JAMES v., 17.

[IT was said in the last chapter that] every man may count the highest and best man he sees as a type of himself, a picture of his own possibilities, and say, "Because he does these things, I can do them too." But now we begin to see that in many ways one man can do what other men cannot do. The inequalities of men force themselves upon us, and our broad statement seems to need qualification. For all men are not "born equal." The inequalities of condition, of intelligence, and even—which is far more puzzling—of the moral nature, present themselves on every side, and compel us to ask what there is left that is common to all men when every inequality has been allowed for. How far may a man take the best of his race for a type of himself, and say, "What he can do, I can do"?

The clearest statement of the answer is in that old

figure which the Bible uses so continually, of the whole world as a household under the Fatherhood of God. He is our Father, and all we are brethren. Now, in a household full of children there are inequalities enough, but there are certain things which all the children have in common simply because they are the children. They are unequal in beauty, in taste, in intelligence, in culture, and in thoughtfulness; one will be brave, another timid; one will be prudent and another careless; one will be headstrong and another docile; but yet, beneath all their differences, two things will be common to them all. They will all have their father's nature, and they will all have the household rights.

Something like that seems to be true about men's share in the qualities of mankind. There are some which are personal, and in those there may be great variety. But there are others, broader, more fundamental, which are in the very nature of the race. These any child may aspire to most zealously. The high degree in which some brother has attained them may be only the picture of what he may attain.

Take St. Paul, for instance. He is a child of God, and so am I. Then we are brothers. But what then? Because he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, shall I conclude that I, too, can reason of

the eternal mysteries of Providence, the infinite complexity of human life? Because he invaded Europe with his truth, and turned the tides of history, shall I make myself foolish by asserting that I, too, have such power? Those qualities are personal; God gave them to this special child. But when I come to look at his nature, at the truth, the reverence, the conscience, the religion of the great Apostle,—it is different. These are his manhood, and there is not one of us that can read his story, and not feel his own power of being a truthful, reverent, conscientious, religious man grow clearer. When he struggles after holiness, I recognize the universal human nature. When he lays hold on God's promises, I recognize the universal human right. There I may follow him with all eagerness and hope. So feel always about the noblest of your race, whether they be the greatest in history or the men and women in your own circle who, you know, are far beyond yourself. There is something personal in them all, which you may never reproduce; but so far as they illustrate at its best our common human nature, so far as they are laying claim to those gifts of a good life which God offers to all of us, follow on after them, getting new courage, new faith in yourself, from what you see them do.

It is above all in spiritual things that one man has a right to make the attainments of the best among his brethren the revelation of his own capacity. The spiritual gifts of God are those to which He gives His children the most unmistakable and inalienable rights. The religious nature is different in all of us, but it is in all of us. In every man, under some form or other, that relation of the child's soul to the Father's soul which constitutes religion is possible.

We might with almost perfect confidence appeal to men's consciousness for this; but we are dealing with St. James's argument. "Here is a man," he says, "at prayer. No matter if the distance of centuries separates him from us. No matter if he is immensely greater, stronger than we are. He is a man, a man with a genuine humanity, a man 'with like passions as we are.' He is praying, and to his prayer there comes an answer. He wants rain. His nature, needy and imperfect, wants something which only the absolute and perfect Nature can bestow; and because he is a child of God, with all the sacred rights of a child of God, he prays. Not because he is Elijah, not because of something which belongs to him alone, but because he is a man, in virtue of the needs and privileges that be-

long to all our race, he prays; and the answer, the rain, comes."

Now apply St. James's argument. Here is a soul that says, "I cannot pray as I ought. I am living too far from God. I am too worldly. He will not hear." But are you not needy? Are you not His child? That is the whole matter. Your nature, full of the wants which He has given it; your right, the right of the child to the Father's hearing,—these you can bring. More than these what soul among all the praying multitudes has ever brought?

There is something that you want with all your soul. Perhaps it is the better life, the softer heart, the love of God, the rain and dew of grace. Whatever it may be, why are you not praying for it? Your needy nature, your prerogative of childhood —those are all the credentials that you need. Take them; go up and cast yourself down beside Elijah, beside David,—nay, beside the praying Jesus. They are men of "like passions" to your own. The God who heard them will hear you; and the grace without which no man can truly live shall be given you.

We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,

Or others, that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care;
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?

O Eternal Lord, who art great and wonderful in glory, the Life of all, the Help of those that flee unto Thee, and the Hope of those that cry unto Thee, cleanse me from sin, secret and open, that with a pure heart and fervent mind, with perfect love and calm hope, I may venture fearlessly to pray unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Friday after the Third Sunday.

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king.—PSALM cxlix., 2.

PEOPLE have been very sad in their kings. They have longed to believe in their kings, and their kings would not let them. The Jews had their full share of this disappointment of the governed in their governors. But for them the privilege of being loyal, the help and culture of rejoicing in their king, were always kept by the presence, behind all their feeble kingships, of the great reign of Jehovah. He was their true King, their King of kings, and He could never fail them.

It is in the Kingship of God that every life and act finds its setting, and that all lives and acts find their unity. Suppose that every human being in the world were God's subject, except one; along with suns and stars, with winds and waves, with streams and trees, every human creature received the laws of its action from the great central Intelligence and Wisdom, except one. This one human

being has no king. He is a law unto himself. He makes no report of what he does to any one. And what is the result? At first, perhaps, a splendid sense of freedom; and then assuredly an awful sense of loneliness. The blessing of being ungoverned; and then the curse of being ungoverned.

And if, after that sense of loneliness has filled his heart, the one ungoverned man begins to feel the gravitation of the universe, and over him, too, as always over the rest, the kingliness of God asserts its power, and he, too, becomes part of the kingdom, can you not feel with what a warmth and strength and comfort and solidity the lonely life feels itself gathered into the great system, perceives the life of the system beating through its life and claiming it, and is no longer little with its own littleness, but large with the largeness of the whole? Every effort which it makes is dignified and enriched with the fulness of the effort of the universal life. It is like the star set in the sky. It is like the leaf set in the tree.

And if this would be the power of the accepted Kingship of God for any one exceptionally solitary life, is it any less powerful for all our lives, which—very fitfully it may be, and very doubtfully, yet truly—have always felt themselves grasped by the

Divine Authority, and rescued out of their feebleness by their obedience to the strength of God?

But also suppose that, by making ourselves His subjects, we could give Him utterance in one direction where He had not utterance now, and where no other obedience but ours could utter Him. This particular jewel, laying itself in the sunlight, can tell the story of the sun's splendor in some point as no other jewel has ever told it. What then? Shall we not seize our privilege? Shall not the chance to make God manifest in some new place, in some new way, make our hearts leap? Surely in all the obedience which all the noblest of God's servants have rendered to their King, this has been a true element. They have manifested God. They have set free a ray of His imprisoned glory. Just to do that has been their joy. As the artist must rejoice that he has set free a dream of beauty, as the scholar thrills with delight when a truth leaps from the unknown and, on the mirror which he has held up, shines into the eyes of men,—so the soldier of God marching to the battle, or the patient sufferer for God lying on his bed, says with a shout or a whisper: "God is glorified in me," and is content.

Those who were specially the "children of Zion,"

that is, the Jewish nation, must have been very familiar with this motive of obedience to God. To keep the glass of their national life so clear that God could shine through it was one of the noblest and strongest forms under which the necessity of righteousness appealed to them. But here, as always, they are only a parable and type of all humanity. It does not need a great nation, set upon the hill of a most peculiar history, to manifest God in this strong, real sense and make Him glorious. It only needs a man or woman with a duty. The youngest man or woman, with the humblest duty, may share that power with Moses, with David, with Paul,—yea, with Jesus Christ. It is denied to none but the poor idler who does nothing. Any one who obeys, who does true service, opens a way through which the glory of God runs forth into the world. The servants of all ages, the children of Zion in all races, stand with their little obediences and are joyful in their King because He is glorious through them. Blessed indeed are we who, obedient to Him in our own day and place, may stand in their company and make His glory still more glorious!

But remember how the psalm from which our text is taken goes on in the next verse. It is in the

sound of happy instruments, and the movement of happy feet, that the loyalty of the people finds completion: "Let them praise His name in the dance; let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp." It is not a slavery, this service of God; it is the satisfaction of the soul in its true home. It is struggle ended in the attainment of the adjusted and reconciled life.

You are made to be happy, but you are so made that you cannot be happy except in God. May He make you all children of Zion, and very joyful in your King!

Around Thee all is light,
And rest of perfect love,
And glory full and bright,
All human thought above;
Thyself the Fountain infinite
Of all ineffable delight.

O depth of holy bliss,
Essential and divine!
What thought can measure this,—
Thy joy, Thy glory—Thine!
Yet such our treasure evermore,
Thy fulness is Thy children's store.

O Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, King of joy and of glory, grant us such joyfulness in Thee and Thy service here, that we may enter into Thy joy hereafter; For Thy mercy's sake.—Amen.

Saturday after the Third Sunday.

And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have ye?—MATT. xv., 34.

HERE was He who could do everything. . . . What hindered Him from sweeping the loaves they had aside and, by a superb exercise of power, bidding the very desert where they stood burst into a wilderness of fruits, break its hard ground with orchard trees all grown and laden, and with streams of sweet water running down them? But no! He brings out the poor remnant which was so little and so miserable that they had thought nothing of it. He has to ask for it. They do not offer it. He says, "How many loaves have ye?" and they seem to answer, "Here is this, but what is this good for?" Then He takes that and multiplies it into all they need.

It seems as if there were two principles here. The first is the principle of continuity—that what is to be must come out of what has been; and the

second is the principle of economy—that nothing, however little or poor, is to be wasted.

These two principles are stamped on all the operations of Nature. . . . You go to her and say, "Feed me or I shall starve"; and her question comes back to you, "How many loaves have you? Give me something to begin with, however little it may be." Ingenious Nature finds a germ wherever it is dropped, but without the germ she will do nothing.

And her law of economy is just as clear. . . . The dead leaves of this autumn are worked into next year's soil. The little stream that has watered the greenness of many meadows goes afterwards to do duty in the great sea. Everywhere profusion, but no waste. For men who need to be trained to reasonableness and care, God has built them just the home that they needed for their training, and sent us to live in this star, which shines among His other stars steadily and soberly with its double light of continuity and economy.

The same is true of truths. . . . St. Paul stands upon Mars' Hill at Athens, and wants to show those people Christ. How does he begin? He takes what He finds there. He points to their altar to the unknown god, and says, "Whom ye

ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." He opens the books of their own writers and there finds his text: "As certain of your own poets have said." Out of their bit of truth he opens the rich completeness of the truth He has to tell. . . . There is no spontaneous generation of truth: "To him that hath shall be given."

We are ready to fancy that character can be spasmodic. By and by, as we find that character does not change, but perpetuates itself, we are apt to turn to the other extreme and to believe that character once fixed is fixed forever. Hosts of young men are reckless because they believe that by and by they can be what they will. Hosts of old men are hopeless because it seems impossible that they can ever be anything but what they are. But both are wrong. Not lawlessness, and not slavish subjection to law, is the system under which we live. Progress and growth,—but growth from old conditions, this is our law. . . . Your future must come out of your past. Your old failures, your old hopes, your old resolutions, your old shames,—these cannot be wasted. They can be wonderfully transformed, but they cannot be thrown away. . . . God must do what must be done, and God will do it. God will make you good by sending His light and love

into this past of yours, and giving all that there is good in it its true development and consecration.

If I could picture God's Spirit coming for the first time to your soul, I can imagine only one beginning to His work: "How many loaves have you? What is there for me to go to work on here?" An honorable love of truth, an unswerving business faithfulness, a keen, quick sensitiveness to the rights of others, a tender pity which leaps up at the sight of suffering,— they are not religion, but they are the material of the religious life. They are the part of your nature in which you may become religious. They are the stone in your nature out of which the temple may be built. When the temple is built out of that native stone, . . . the love of truth, touched by God, has been lifted into a sublime aspiration after Him. The business faithfulness has been transfigured into the patient doing of His will. The regard for others has been exalted into a passionate desire that every man should have the chance to do, and be, his best. Pity for men's sorrows has been changed into a lofty honor for man's value as the son of God in Christ. How shall we tell what has come to pass? Let us take St. Peter's great words: "Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your

hearts." The coming of God's Spirit is the rising of the sun. The world is a new world when the sun has arisen. But the sunrise needs a world already there to shine upon, and it is out of the same old mountains and valleys which have been dreary in the darkness, that it makes its miracles of light. There are some who want to get away from all their past,—who, if they could, would fain begin all over again. Their life with Christ seems one long failure. But you must learn, you must let God teach you, that the only way to get rid of your past is to get a future out of it. God will waste nothing. There is something in your past, even if it be only the sin of which you have repented, which, if you can put it into the Saviour's hands, will be a new life for you. . . .

"How many loaves have ye?" It is the Lord's first question, and the hands of those who really want His help search their robes to see what they have hidden there. One brings his joy; another brings his pain; another brings his helpless desire; another brings his poor resolution; another has nothing to bring except just his sorrow that he has nothing. It is a poor collection, only seven loaves and a few fishes; but it is enough. His blessing falls on them, and they come back to the souls

which gave them up to Him, multiplied into the means of healthy, holy, happy life.

May God help us all, every day of our lives, to come to Christ just as we are, that He may make us more and more just what we ought to be!

> The past is something, but the present more
> (Will not it too be past?);—nor fail withal
> To recognize the future in your hopes:
> Unite them in your manhood each and all,
> Nor mutilate the perfectness of life.

O Lord Jesus Christ, for Thy tender mercy's sake, let Thy blessing rest upon whatever seed of good is in my past, that, quickened by Thee, it may bring forth fruit unto everlasting life; yet not unto me, Lord, not unto me, but unto Thy name be the praise and glory for ever and ever.—Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

And the people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve the Lord.—JOSHUA xxiv., 21.

WHEN Joshua was just about to lead the people into the promised land, he gathered them together and told them of God's demands; and then he bade them choose whose subjects they would be. And their eager answer was, "We will serve Jehovah." And Joshua said to them: "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Behold, to have God for a King was not such a simple or easy thing. It was not an experience into which any man might lightly stroll. It needed preparation. It needed a character in the subject.

When, then, the Israelites, having heard Joshua, paused and thought, and by and by broke out with the declaration, "We will serve the Lord," must they not have searched and understood themselves

with a new scrutiny? They had been down into their own souls. They had asked themselves deep questions: "Can we really serve God? Can we obey the holy, jealous God?" And as they asked, the answer came forth out of their half-discovered souls: "We can! we can!" they cried. New powers revealed themselves. They were more than they had dreamed.

And it is always so. Where is the man who knows himself? Where is the man who has sounded his life and powers to the bottom, and is able to say, "This is all that I can do"? There is no one who has not in him the capacity of serving God, or of serving Him better than he is doing. "What, I? what, I?" you say; and the very suggestion makes you laugh. But you do dishonor to yourself by that laughter. You show how ignorant you are of the rich resources of your own life. If God stepped right across your way and said, "Come! Put your self-indulgence all away. Come! shut the door on your folly; I want you"; and if you really heard Him speak and really answered to His call, what a glorious wonder you would be to yourself!—surprised as the stream must be surprised when in the spring it turns from rigid ice to laughing water. The power of divine enthusiasm, the ability to glow

with great hopes for the fulfilment of the plans of God, the power of pity, the power of skilful and ingenious help, the power of worship,—all these would burn forth from you as the stars burn from the sky, and you would be amazed.

We dwell upon men's ignorance of their own badness; they do not know how weak and mean they are. But they are ignorant, too, of how strong they are, and how noble. When the great loving Master comes, then comes the self-revelation. "Can you serve me?" He says; and the spontaneous hearts answer with a shout, "We can! we can!" and with a surprised, new knowledge of themselves, the children of Zion enter joyfully into the service of their King.

Strength and order, a righteous world, need helped and relieved, and sight of his own soul in its complete capacities,—these are what come of man's obeying God as his King. It would be easy to trace how they all came in some degree to the life of that wonderful people, the Jews, a nation which lived upon the thought of God their King. Only their obedience was a broken and imperfect thing. They remain in history as the perpetual warning that not in lips only, but in life, man must accept the rulership of God before he can receive its blessings.

But great as were the failures of the nation, there were men and women in it who succeeded. We can see them now as we look back through the transparent centuries. Sometimes it is a great monarch leading an army to the battle. Sometimes it is a poor woman sitting with a fragment of the Law, and listening in stillness while God speaks to her out of its pages. Sometimes it is a prophet thundering, "Thus saith the Lord." Everywhere the power of the personal loyalty is the same. The life sets itself solid; God is glorified; God's work gets done; and man sees himself. In countless houses and experiences the children of Zion were busy and glad in the service of their King.

At last it all came to completion in the great Child of Zion, Jesus Christ; and from Him it opened out, breaking the tight shell of Judaism, and offered itself to all the world. Look at the life of Christ and see the solidity, the luminousness, the effectiveness, and the knowledge of itself by which it was filled, solely and entirely by His obedience and loyalty to His Father.

With us how different it is! God is our King, we say; and so He is. Life would be another thing if He were not our King, if He were to pass away entirely, to be disproved and dissipated into a blind

force; or if, He still living, we were no longer His loving, loyal subjects. Our obedience to Him is real. It is not a theory. It is not a dream. But oh, how pitful, how intermittent and spasmodic it is! We fall upon our knees sometimes,—nay, a man does not fall to his knees, he rises to them; he is never so great as when he is humbly claiming the great Strength. Oh for a life lived upon our knees, a life all loyalty, a life lived by obedience as lungs live by the air! Then no more of this vagueness and darkness and weariness and self-distrust, but a great, brave, humble happiness, the children of Zion glad and eager in the service of their King.

True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,
King of our lives, by Thy grace we will be;
Under Thy standard, exalted and royal,
Strong in Thy strength, we will battle for Thee.

True-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful allegiance
Yielding henceforth to our glorious King;
Valiant endeavor and loving obedience
Freely and joyously now we would bring.

O God, King of kings and Lord of lords, whose service is perfect freedom, give me grace to serve Thee so faithfully here, that hereafter I may enter into the joy of Thy service in the life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday.

And he [David] said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this : is it not the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it.—2 SAMUEL xxiii., 17.

THE mere water of the Bethlehem well he might have drunk, but this water, full of heroism and danger, was too holy. It would have been like using the consecrated furniture of the Temple for his household purposes. It was too precious for him, and so, in the simple words of the story, he "poured it out unto the Lord."

Is not the lesson and example of such an act plain enough?—that all the highest sort of value and life is too sacred for a man to keep; that it belongs to God? The best we have, not merely in a material, but in a spiritual sense, not merely that which costs the most money, but that which costs the most experience, that which enlists our deepest feeling, our purest affections, our warmest enthusiasm, our most

intense emotion,—these are all universally and distinctively religious. You expect the feelings that they excite to plunge or flutter Godward. They are too sacred to keep and feed ourselves upon, as upon ordinary luxuries of sentiment. They must be "poured out unto the Lord."

We must go farther. Notice how David seemed to feel that it was a necessity, a law, that this supremely holy water was not his, but God's. So any parallel act of ours is, rightly looked at, also a necessity and a law. It is involved in their very nature that our highest experiences must be put to their highest uses. They belong to God, and they must be given to Him, or they become deadly and destructive. Can we doubt that, if David had resisted the law he felt, and had drunk that water himself, it would have been a curse to him? That which, poured out to God, was sweetness and gratitude and nobleness, taken into his own lips would have been the poison of selfishness and heartlessness.

A great sorrow, for instance, tears a man's ordinary supports away from him and leaves the tendrils of his life, hurt and sore with the violence, feeling about for some new thing to cling to. Then God, then Christ, in the awful closeness and distinctness with which at such times the two worlds meet each

other, come and set Themselves within the grasp of that wounded and bleeding life. If it will not lay hold of Them, its wounds are all for nothing, and with the scars of its useless discipline disfiguring and maiming it, it will twine about some new, unfit thing, or it will twist in upon itself, and all good, healthy life for it will be over. The experience which, poured out to God, is vital and saving, kept away from Him, is deadly. It is a law, then, that our deepest emotions, which accompany the critical moments of life, are necessarily religious.

What then? Shall we say that religion is for critical moments only, and so leave the dreary wastes between these rare mountain-tops wholly unblest? Ah, here is the beauty that comes in to crown it all! He who has consecrated deep emotion finds how the deep springs run wider than he thinks, and all his life begins to break and burst out with the strong feeling which underlies it all. He who humbly brings God in at the most exalted door of his life sees all his life lift its low roof and stretch its narrow walls to make Him a temple. He who really prays upon his knees finds all the work he does grow prayerful.

Perhaps, in these Lenten days, you are feeling something of the criticalness of life, or of some deep

experience of life. It seems as if it were not made for you alone. It is too sacred. It has cost too much. Oh that you would now, solemnly, calmly, prayerfully pour it out to God!

> And oh, how loving, dearest Lord, how tender
> Beyond all love Thou art,
> When to Thy feet we cling in full surrender
> With sorrow-broken heart!

O blessed Saviour, give me grace to consecrate my most precious things to Thee in Thy service; that they and I may be forever enriched by Thy blessing: For Thy Name's sake.—Amen.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday.

Therefore I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.—LUKE vii., 47.

WHAT did Christ mean? To put it into few words, He must have meant that that soul's love for Him secured and testified to the soul's forgiveness, because it brought the soul where it was possible for God to forgive it.

If this be so, then the soul's love to God must be a very great and complete thing. It cannot be a single act. It must be a great, comprehensive condition of the soul, embracing all its life. Every part of us is capable of loving. The whole being, glowing with the sense that it all belongs to God, craving to satisfy itself in every part with Him, the mind longing to know Him, the admiration eager to lift itself up and really honor Him above all things, the will wanting to do what He would do, —the whole nature thus moving on to His nature with enthusiasm and hope,—that is what it is to

love Jesus Christ. Think of the love which the disciples felt, and you see that you can leave out none of these elements. Their love must have had this completeness. A love less complete cannot give Christ the opportunity to do the work He longs to do. On a love thus complete He not merely can, He must, do His entire work, and thoroughly forgive the soul.

But the love which makes forgiveness possible, and so ensures it, must be an active power. Love and activity belong together. It is not merely that love makes activity as cause makes effect; rather love and activity are one, the inward and outward form of the same power. And it is by activity, by the outward utterance of a condition into a deed, that a nature is often opened to the highest influences which are endeavoring to work upon it. It is through the active obedience of the child to the father that the father's standards and character become the child's. It is by man's working with Nature that Nature gives her best blessings to mankind.

And so it is with a man's love to God. Let it remain a sentiment, however warm and glowing, and it is realized mainly as a self-consciousness of the man who feels it. Let it go forth in action, and

all the doors and windows of the life are open, and the light and power of God flow in on every side. . . . It is not that he earns a grace of God which had been withheld until he earned it; it simply is that active love completes the work of meditative love, and throws the whole soul open to the influence of God. The beauty of holiness is all revealed. Christ is formed in the nature which loves and works like Him. And so sin is forgiven,—nay, is forth-given, given away, thrust out, because of the great love. Never rest until, opening your love for God into that which is its own completion—the active service of God — you make it possible for Him to give you His full forgiveness.

Moreover, the love which makes forgiveness possible is an unselfish love. Most beautiful always is the progress of love from selfishness into unselfishness. "Why do you love your friend?" I say to some devoted heart, and very likely the first answer is, "Because he has done such great things for me." By and by, when the friendship has grown riper, I ask again, "Why do you love your friend?" and now a change has come; self has drifted out of sight. "Because he is what he is; because, being what he is, no one can know him and not love him," —that is the answer now. Not that the old sense

of gratitude has passed away. There is gratitude still, but gratitude of the purest and loftiest sort, gratitude to the good one because he is good, gratitude for the blessing that comes to us from his very being good.

"We give thanks to Thee, O, Lord, for Thy great glory": do not those words of the grand chant of the Christian ages contain the same thought regarding God—a love for Him that is freed from the last mixture of self-seeking? Simply for what Thou art we love Thee and give thanks to Thee, O God. And is it not evident enough that into a love like that, the very deepest gifts of the loved Holiness must flow down, and that God must give Himself forth to that soul because it loves much?

Now do we not begin to see what is, what must be, the rich meaning of those two words which make the focal points of this great saying of Jesus Christ —forgiveness and love? The love of man for God, the forgiveness of man's sins by God,—they are the great, solemn movements of the two natures which belong together towards each other. They so belong together that none can say absolutely which comes first. Now it is God's forgiveness which tempts man's love; now it is man's love which makes possible God's forgiveness. In the completed

experience of the soul which enters, full of the humble triumph of redemption, into the perfect life of heaven, there are both,—the certainty of an unearned forgiveness, and the consciousness of a possessing and transforming love. Those are the powers under which eternity begins; and what is the ripeness of glory which must fill it even to its endless end? Must it not be the ever-deepening certainty of forgiveness, the ever-widening consciousness of love? This is the song of the redeemed: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

It is good to know that that song of the courts of heaven is being sung, low but sweet, in souls which seem silent, in chambers which seem full only of sorrow and pain, here on the earth. The jubilee of heaven shall be only the bursting forth of that song for all the universe to hear.

O Bringer of salvation,
  Who wondrously hast wrought,—
Thyself the revelation
  Of love beyond our thought:
We worship Thee, we bless Thee,
  To Thee alone we sing;
We praise Thee and confess Thee
  Our gracious Lord and King.

Oh, grant the consummation
Of this our song above,
In endless adoration
And everlasting love:
Then shall we praise and bless Thee
Where perfect praises ring,
And evermore confess Thee
Our Saviour and our King.

I beseech Thee, O Lord, to forget my sins, and to remember Thy mercies; that, rejoicing in Thy forgiveness, I may from a full heart adore and praise Thee on earth and in heaven.—Amen.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday.

Who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.—PSALM lxxxiv., 6.

THE Prayer Book version of these words is a little different: "Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well; and the pools are filled with water." Let us keep both versions in mind.

The lesson of the valley of Baca, the vale of misery, evidently is, the turning of sorrow into joy. . . . There are two theories about this thing: one we may call the theory of compensation, the other the theory of transformation. To how many Christians heaven and the eternal happiness present themselves under the guise of the compensation theory. This world is the great "down," the next world is the great "up" which is to make it good. This would be the idea under which the pilgrim through the valley of Baca would not turn it into a well, but only be kept up through it by far-off visions of the waters of salvation which, when he

got to Jerusalem, he should find flowing out of the mount of God. . . .

See how different it is from this other theory of transformation. David's pilgrims, "going through the vale of misery, use it for a well." It was not simply a sorrow that was succeeded by joy, not merely a peace promised and looked for, it was a peace found. When they grew thirsty they looked not merely farther on into the heart of the future, but deeper down into the bosom of the present.

Things are what they are used for. . . . The artist uses a stone, and it is a statue; the mason uses a stone, and it is a doorstep. . . . Man, the savage, is ruled by things,—rivers, hills, forests, —they make of him what their own tendencies suggest; and, on the other hand, man, the citizen, man civilized, rules all things, makes of them what he pleases. . . . Now, let this great user, man, this one moral force, be called upon to go down into the vale of Baca, into the vale of misery. He finds there all the circumstances of suffering, poverty, sickness, bereavement, sin itself. What then? These are things, and he is man. Let him rule them, not be ruled by them. Let him take down there a religious, trustful nature, a pious, cheerful heart, and there is more promised than just that his

cheerful piety shall be able to support him through; he shall exercise his human right of ruling and of using these things, and his cheerful, trustful heart shall come out with a more perfect joy and a more certain faith than he had carried in. He shall not come out half-dead with thirst, just able to drag himself up to the fountain at the end, but it shall be as David so beautifully says: "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up his head."

There is something very beautiful in the truth that suffering, rightly used, is not a cramping, binding, restricting of the human soul, but a setting of it free. It is not a violation of the natural order, it is only a more or less violent breaking open of some abnormal state, that the natural order may be resumed. It is the opening of a cage door. It is the breaking in of a prison wall. This is the thought of those fine old lines of an early English poet:

> The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks that time has made:
> Stronger by weakness, wiser men become
> As they draw near to their eternal home.

Oh, how many battered cottages have thus let in the light! How many broken bodies have set their

souls free, and how many shattered homes have let the men and women who sat in darkness in them see the great light of a present God! . . .

We have spoken thus of irresponsible suffering only; but in a far nobler way it is true of the responsible suffering which comes of sin. . . . And can this valley, too, break forth in wells? Tell me, O Christians, you who out of the conviction of your sinfulness have found a Saviour from your sin, . . . is not the well of richest joy right here in the midst of the valley of completest sorrow? Where sin abounded, does not grace much more abound? If any of you are now going through that valley, may He who led you there teach you how to "use it for a well." Every step as you go through it, may you hear a voice beside you crying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the fountain."

The Bible calls the world a world of sorrow; but the same Bible tells us there is a way of making the vale of misery to laugh with springs and fountains. Remember, it is not just compensation, but transformation, that you are to seek. Not heaven yet, —that looms before us, tempting us on; but now the earth, with all its duties, sorrows, difficulties, doubts and dangers. We want a faith, a truth, to

help us now, right here, while we are stumbling about, dizzied and fainting with our thirst.

And we can have it. One who was man, yet mightier than man, has walked the vale before us. When He walked it, He turned it all into a well of living water. To them who are willing to walk in His footsteps, to keep in His light, the well He opened shall be forever flowing. Nay, it shall pass into them, and fulfil there Christ's own words: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life."

O Lord, of good the Fountain free,
Close by our hard day's journeying,
Be Thou the all-sufficing spring,
And hourly may we drink of Thee!

O God, in mercy grant that I may not be led into any path where Thou canst not be present to refresh me; nor fail to find the fresh springs of Thy grace in every path where I am led by Thy Providence: For Christ's sake.—Amen.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.—MATT. ii., 8.

THE word "purity" in a general sense means unmixedness, simplicity. Anything is pure when it is simply itself, free from all foreign intrusion.

The action of anything depends upon its nature. Everything does what it does because it is what it is. Make it to be something else, and it must forfeit just that degree of its active, natural power. Make water to be anything else, and, though it may serve new uses, it will certainly lose some of the old ones, —its old, essential uses of quenching man's thirst and making plants grow.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." What, then, is a pure human heart? Just as pure water is water, and nothing else, so a pure human heart is a heart free from all foreign admixture, a heart with everything taken out of it which infects its nature and therefore infects its action, and robs it of any power which, as the heart of man, it ought to have. All

the evil in our hearts, no matter how intimately and deeply it may have got in there, is always an intruder, never a part of humanity, always an importation from without.

What though this pure heart, search where we will, is never found? It is no less a real thing. You might taint with fatal poison all the water that is on the earth to-day, till, from the oceans that lap and shape the continents to the vase that stands on your table, there should not be a drop of water which it were not deadly for the lips of men to touch. Still you have not got rid of the fact that water is not a poison, but a healthy thing. Still, through your poisoned oceans would gleam the light of that pure water which is lost, and toward which all nature will be laboring to restore her corrupted lakes and rivers.

Humanity, at its worst, is bad enough certainly, but still we must insist that sin is a foreigner and an intruder. We must keep before ourselves the truth of a pure human heart, the picture of a nature from which all intruders have been banished, and which shows what a noble thing the human nature was meant to be. . . . This truth of sin as a foreign element, a disturbance, was one of the things that Christ was always endeavoring to teach. Look at

His parables. There was a field with good seed sown in it; but while the men slept the enemy came and sowed tares,—an invasion from without. There was a house built and furnished, even swept and garnished, but occupied by devils,—an intrusion demanding an ejection. There was a vineyard royally planted, fortified, adorned. Bad husbandmen got hold of it and would not let the master and his messengers come in,—an usurpation by a hostile power.

And the teaching of Christ was an announcement of the work of Christ. It was a redemption,—the buying back of a property from a false and unnatural owner. It was not man, but sin, that Christ was fighting with. Not with man, but for man,—that is the great Christian truth. Redemption is the assertion of the primal purity of the human heart. The Atonement created no new power in the life of man, it only cleared off and cleared out the clogs and clouds that were obstructing his life, and making it not itself. . . .

But let us pass on to the promise: "They shall see God." Now, in a certain deep sense, only the like can see its like. The eye sees the sun because of the correspondences between its construction and the sun's rays. So, in a larger sense, the mind sees

truth because of the fitness which there is between the human intellect and all which is really true. When, then, it is said of the pure human heart that it shall "see God," it is the same thing as if it were said that it should be like to God, since it could not possibly see Him if it were not like Him. . . .

"Seeing God" is a comprehensive term. It uses a part for the whole, the eye for all of the body. The heart sees God in loving Him; the mind sees God in believing on Him; the will sees God in submitting to Him; the hand sees God in working for Him. Each in its function clasps itself around God, and so, though He is a Spirit, though He "dwells in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see," yet there is a real sense in which the man or woman who is pure in heart may see Him with the quickened apprehension of an obedient and loving life.

But the promise does not exhaust itself with the imperfect sight of God which we have in this life. The Bible teaches us that there is to be a completer vision of Him in the other life. "We shall see Him as He is," says St. John. "Then face to face," says St. Paul. As we step across the line between the two lives, by some new, ineffable, heavenly sense we shall behold Him with a clearness and

vividness of sight that we can scarcely conceive of now. For, as on earth we partially saw Him because we were partially like Him, so in heaven, the terms being reversed, "we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."

On that promise let us feed and live and act. For "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

I can not see Him clear,
Mine eyes with sin are dim,
And only hearts all pure
May dare to gaze on Him;
But yet by faith His form I see,
And know Him very near to me.

Some time with clearer sight
Mine eyes will overbrim,
When, by His own pure light,
I gaze and gaze on Him,
And find what unimagined bliss
It is to see Him as He is!

O God, Who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, look not on me, I beseech Thee, save through the spotless purity of Thy Beloved Son, Who hath promised to wash all repentant sinners white in His own precious blood. Lord, I repent, help Thou mine unrepentance; that at last I may come to see Thee, whom to see is everlasting life. —Amen.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday.

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow . . . wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. —LAM. i., 12.

JERUSALEM, the city of Jeremiah's love, was to him a person, a person in misery and failure. She sat by the roadside of the nations, humiliated and crushed with the thought of what all the brilliant promise of her life had come to, and bade men own that they knew nothing like it. Here was the typical, the consummate failure of the world: "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Filling our minds with this picture, let us look around and see some of the other failures of which the world is full.

To fail in life is to miss of our appointed end, the end for which our life was made. You think your life a success because men tell you that it is, because you satisfy their ordinary standards and win their commonplace approval. You need to be very sure

not to let their satisfaction with you hide from you the truth, if in your heart you know you are not using the powers that God gave you, nor doing what He sent you into the world to do. On the other hand, do not be perplexed, bewildered, and discouraged if men keep calling your life a failure, when all the time you know that God is leading you along to a more and more perfect fulfilling of His purposes. Trust yourself ever more and more hopefully to Him, and do not let their misconceptions trouble you.

It is not failure for a man to learn his limitations. A man does not fail simply because he does not do all that he meant to do. A young minister starts out almost feeling that he is going to convert the world. A young statesman goes forth to regenerate government and build the perfect State. By and by the minister is seen patiently working in an obscure parish, feeding a few humble men and women with the bread of life; and the statesman has settled down in some corner of the public service, and is trying to put honesty and vigor into the affairs of some local office. Has either of them failed? Each has but learned his limits; and so far from being failure, it is the first condition of success. The processes that bring it about are no more defeats than

are the prunings of the tree that stop its lawless growth and make it learn how many apples it really has the power to ripen.

We talk about the victims of circumstances. There can be no victim of circumstances in the long run, unless the soul itself turns traitor and betrays the life. It may be thwarted by circumstances here or there; it may be turned back by this wall, and find itself unable to cross that stream; but all the time, so long as its defeats are all from forces outside itself, so long as it is not its own enemy, it finds at last that, under all the hindrances, in spite of all the hostilities, the purposes of its life, its education, its development, are flowing on. Thwarted in one struggle, by a new struggle in a new place, it conquers for itself a way, till at last it learns that God and a human soul, working together for that soul's completeness, are too strong for any array of crushing circumstances which can try to overwhelm it.

The greatest seeming failure that the world has ever seen was Calvary. The Crucifixion was closing the life that had been the subject of such mighty hopes. The hands that worked the miracles were nailed to the cross. The mouth that had denounced the Pharisees, and promised the kingdom of heaven, was crying out piteously for a drop of water. The

crowd that used to follow Him and shout "Hosanna!" was gone, or lingered only to taunt the dying Jesus. Was there ever such a failure?

Was there ever such a success? Was any spiritual force ever so set free by the utter ruin of all material prosperity? He was lifted up, and drew all men unto Him. How strange it is that Christians, seeing how Christ could gain the Unseen only by the complete sacrifice of the Seen, should still go on clinging to the Seen, thinking that all is lost when the external, the material, has failed, finding it so hard to get hold of the truth and beauty of spiritual success!

The only real failure for a man's life is in sin. There may be many losses, many givings up of this or that, but in behind them all stands that final and central catastrophe of sin. Till that has come, no man has failed. Often your life goes cold and naked and wretched after you have had to cast some of its pleasant things away, but so long as you do not give yourself up to sin you have not failed of the purpose for which God made you. So, at last, whatever else you suffer, you shall come out safe. Whatever else you lose, you shall save your soul alive.

Go back for a moment to the old story of Jere-

miah, and see his figure of Jerusalem sitting so desolate and stately in her sorrow. I have made that figure of the fallen city the image of a fallen soul, because I wanted to give just that stateliness, that grandeur, to the tragedy of sin. I want you to see how terrible it is. God forbid that, in this Lent, we should feel that the sin with which I hope we have all set ourselves to struggle, is a weak and feeble adversary. It is a terrible enemy. To struggle with it calls out the best of all our powers; to conquer it we must have the strength of God added to our strength. Yet there is nothing so good for us as to have a struggle which taxes all our powers, in which at the same time we are confident of victory. And the death of Christ on the cross bears everlasting witness of just these two things: the strength of sin, and the certainty of the believer's triumph; the strength of the enemy, and the greater strength of our Redeemer.

> In weakness and weariness joy shall abound,
> For strength everlasting in Thee shall be found;
> Our Refuge, our Helper, in conflict and woe,
> Our mighty Defender, how blessed to know
> That "Thine is the power."

Grant, O Lord, that we may so enter into the secret of Christ's death, that we shall not be failures, but more than conquerors through Him.—Amen.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday.

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.—PSALM cxxxvii., 1.

ONE theory of life easily concludes that, because man is found where he is, and what he is, therefore here he must always have been and here he was always meant to be,—the cheap philosophy of "Whatever is, is right." The Bible idea is not that. It always holds that man has gone out from the first intention of his being, that he is in exile; and that much that is, is wrong. It still believes in the home from which the exile came, in his inalienated right there, and in the possibility of his return. . . . This Psalm of the Captivity is the whole idea of the Bible flashed into the most intense and vivid picture. And it tells the story not merely of a nation of captives, weeping in the desolation of their hearts beside the river Euphrates, over two thousand years ago, but of the whole exile

of Humanity, with its endless longing for its lost home. Man sits in the midst of the pleasant things of his lower lot, and knows that he was made for something higher. He remembers Zion.

For one fact in human life which this theory of exile meets, take the universal restlessness of human life. The baby's cry of pain, the cynic's captious quarrelling with all he touches, the poet's dream of an ideal, the schemer's endless plots for the world's improvement, the calm, grave expectation of the philosopher who sees a struggle everywhere after a higher life, and the lofty aspirations of religion that stream up in a thousand shapes of hope and faith;—these all together, differing greatly in dignity, in worth, in educating power,—all together make up the restlessness of mankind that keeps our homes in eager change, our streets in tumult, and the nations in continual revolution. There is no calm except in expectation, no calm except in the steady pull upon a rope that is drawing us into a yet unopened future. What theory of life can cover and explain the everlasting human restlessness like this Bible theory of the exiled life of man?

Or take the whole nature of the happiness that we see in this world. There is a sort of joy in pleasant days and easy fortunes which is all in the present,

but it is slight and superficial. All the deepest happiness that we know has in it an element of expectation, of longing, of unfulfilment. These two kinds of joys answer exactly to the experiences of those old Jews in Babylon, who must often have wandered in delighted curiosity about the pleasant streets of the strange, gorgeous city, but always as evening came must have reverted with an entirely different kind of joy to the home that their souls remembered and longed for, and to which they hoped to return. So the lighter happinesses satisfy us here, but our highest joys run out into other conditions, and remind us that we are strangers and pilgrims.

See, again, how this Bible picture furnishes a test of the value of the things about us, which is just what we need. On the one hand are the things which are associated with our daily life, those which are necessary to keep us alive and fit for our higher operations; on the other hand are all those things which are doing anything to wake up the sluggish soul and bring it on to its high destiny. . . . You say, "I must make money," and you are willing to say also, "I must do righteousness, and love mercy, and walk humbly with my God." Yes, both are *musts*, but do not dare to think that the two

are of equal value. The "must" of growing rich concerns your life in exile; the "must" of growing holy concerns the return out of exile. . . .

Dealing as we are with a figurative expression when we talk of human life as an exile, we are in danger of not perfectly grasping its idea. Let us be clear about it,—what is this return? Not simply a change of place from one part of the universe to another. The exile is not a thing of place, of the geography of the universe at all; it is a moral and spiritual thing. The return that we have to make is not to heaven, but to God; and a return to God means a return to godliness. If, without going to heaven, here on this earth man could come perfectly home to God, and be entirely obedient to Him, and so be wholly like Him, then the exile would be over here, and the soul would find here a perfect home of perfect rest.

But it seems as if that could not be. Some strange necessity seems to decree that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"; but still let us remember that it is God and not heaven; it is the spirit made like and laid close to His Spirit, and not the delight of the jasper walls and golden gates, for which the soul longs and prepares.

We have spoken of man as living in exile, and

waiting for his home. Yet he has his work to do in the exile life, and he may do it all the better for the constant sense that this is not his home. Do you remember Daniel? While he stayed in Babylon he did a great work for Babylon. He was one of the "three presidents"; he was "ruler of the whole province of Babylon"; he was "chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon." Those prayers that he made three times a day with his chamber window open towards Jerusalem made him wise and strong for the daily needs of Babylon. And the longing for heaven and for God that does not make us clearer-headed, readier-handed, larger-hearted for the work of life is very faulty somewhere. The true dweller in the unseen will have a clearer judgment, a finer perception, and a more earnest heart when he comes among the labors of things seen. . . .

"We are travelling home to God." In Him is our lost life. Every true man must be a seeker for his life; and knowing that God has it he seeks God. He finds all of God's will that he can, and does it. He clings close to the manifested God and drinks the Spirit of Christ. So gradually he draws near his home, until at last the seeker is a finder; the exile is over and the true life begun.

For are we not at home in Thee,
And all this world a visioned show,
That, knowing what Abroad is, we
What Home is, too, may know?

O Lord God of time and eternity, who exilest us in time to the end that when time is over we may attain to a blessed eternity; grant us wisdom so to redeem the time that we fail not of coming at last to our eternal home; through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.—JOHN xvi., 27.

THE love of God is the life of man. The soul of man lives by the love of God, just as his body lives by the air of heaven. And very much that is true of the body living by the air, is true also of the soul living by God's love. That love offers itself everywhere. It turns itself into every kind of activity in the soul to which it gives vitality, making each soul a separate, peculiar being, and giving each soul different powers according to its different needs at different times: now the power of work and now the power of patience; and yet it is itself always the same one force, the love of God. In all that life means, in all that life can do, the love of God is the life of man.

Jesus Christ, speaking to His disciples, tells them that God loves them, too, as well as Him. But what strikes us, especially, is the reason which He

gives: "The Father loveth you, because ye have loved Me." The reason why the Father loves these disciples — Peter, James, John — is that they love Christ. The Father has a reason for His love for men. It is not totally reasonless; it is not something of pure whim; it is too precious for that. For the power of affection is the most precious thing that any nature owns. Like building cellar walls of gold, like watering weeds with rare liquids distilled from priceless plants, so is the wasteful extravagance with which men give their loves to things and people that have no good reason for being loved, and who can give back nothing for the affection that is given them. Men are careful of their labor and their money. They will not give anxiety or work without good cause. But their loves they scatter everywhere as if they were, of their very nature, things of whim. And this absence of reason we carry over from man to God, and seem to think that He has no cause, no deep economy by which He gives His love.

Our misunderstanding, in part at least, comes from a confusion between the two forms, or utterances, of the love of God for man. God has a love which is His by His nature, and a love of approbation,—a natural love and an approving love, if we

may call them so. With the first love, His natural love, He loves all men, sinners and saints together. With His second love, His love of approbation, He loves those souls which He can love, those souls that have a spiritual loveliness.

This is not hard to understand. You say to your child, "If you do so and so, I cannot love you." But you do not for a moment mean that anything which that child can do can break up and destroy that deep, natural love which is in your heart for him forever, just because he is your child. It is the other love, the love of approbation, that is in danger, the love that must have reason, that cannot give itself save where it is deserved. And so of God. When it is written, "God so loved the world that He gave His Son," it is His love of nature, His natural love, that is meant,—a love as old as creation, and as absolutely universal as humanity. But when it is written: "I love them that love Me," it is this love of approbation that is meant, this love that springs out of the bosom of the universal Love for all mankind, to meet with special welcome every single soul that turns and struggles towards God.

Now when Christ says, "The Father loveth you because ye have loved Me," it is, beyond all doubt, God's second love—the love of approbation, which

must have a reason for its existence—that is spoken of. But where is it that God's reasons will ultimately lie? Where is it that the love of approbation can be bestowed? The basis must be in character.

Look at the lovers of Christ in those old days when He was here among men. Many of them were poor, untrained people, they were people of very little range of thought and life, they were simple as children, but they all had something that belongs with the children's simplicity,—they all had earnestness, docility, truthfulness, the capacity of admiration and of catching into themselves the greatness which they admired, and the willingness to be led by Him whom they trusted. Those are the saving qualities. Those are constituents of a nature which a higher nature can love, and to which, into which, he can easily and freely give himself. And ever since those first Christian days, the life and nature of Jesus Christ have been the test of men. His life has always hung, it hangs to-day, like a magnet over humanity, and those that love Him flee to Him. And, looking back across the ages, and seeing what sort of men and women have always turned to Him and loved Him, very few will deny that the souls whom Christ has called into His

love and likeness have thereby been made pure and humble and eager and earnest, ready for and capable of receiving the gift of the Highest, made such souls as God can love.

This, then, is the true love for Christ,—the soul giving itself to His service, finding in Him Divine goodness and Divine help, growing like Him by its admiration and adoration, and so finally going through loving Christ to being loved by God.

> Learn that to love is the one way to know
> Or God or man : it is not love received
> That maketh man to know the inner life
> Of them that love ; but his own love bestowed
> Shall do it.

I bless Thee, O Heavenly Father, Fountain of love unceasing, for that Thou hast vouchsafed to remember me in love ; therefore let me be possessed by love ; let me sing the song of love ; let my soul spend itself in Thy praise, rejoicing in love. Let me love Thee more than myself, and love myself only for Thee ; and in Thee all that truly love Thee, as the law of love commandeth : For the love of Thine only-begotten Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.—Amen.

Monday after the Fifth Sunday.

Surely he scorneth the scorners.—PROVERBS iii., 6.

THE essence of scornfulness is an absence of sympathy. It is not easy to define sympathy, and yet we all have some idea, not very vague, of what it is and to what sort of people it belongs. There are some persons who, while they live their own peculiar life, and perhaps have a distinctive individuality, seem to have in themselves something of every other person with whom they come in contact. There is something of the child in them, though they are grown up. There is something of the woman in them, though they are men. There is something of untrained simplicity in them, though they are highly cultivated. And so when a man of any sort comes to one of them, he finds himself there, and is at home immediately. "He hath set the world in their heart," says the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, speaking of what God had done for man; and, with some men, this world in

their heart seems most clear. There is nothing in the world which can present itself to them which does not seem to find itself in them.

Christ was sympathetic because of the largeness of His human life. His humanity included all the other humanities; and as our natures enlarge under His influence to something nearer His measure, we, too, shall be able to comprehend as He did the lots and lives of our brethren. He was free from the blindness of scorn. He denounced Chorazin, He pitied Jerusalem. He encouraged the disciples. He was thoughtful even of Judas. And so all natures opened wide unto Him. He saw home to the heart of every one. "Come see a man that told me all that ever I did!" cried out the woman of Samaria. "Whence knowest Thou me?" wondered Nathaniel. "Somebody hath touched me," said the Lord when the finger, heavy with need but light with fear, was laid upon His garment's hem. He knew them all because He loved them all, because no scorn for the most miserable of them had ever blinded His eyes.

Thus we see that sympathy is the power of intelligence. It is only by a cordial entrance into another man's life that you get any real knowledge of that other man. No one ever made a cold, un-

sympathetic study of his fellow-man, and really got at the truth about him, the key and mainspring of his being. Contempt, a quick conclusion of the worthlessness of anything that we look at, shuts down, quick as a flash, the iron door between that thing and us. We are cut off from it at once, and intelligence becomes impossible. Therefore scorn condemns a man to ignorance, and stunts and imprisons his life. . . .

When we are thinking of the understanding of one being by another, we revert at once to the way in which God understands all His children; and one strong element in that perfect knowledge of us must be the profound sympathy, the entire absence of scorn or contemptuousness from His heart. He has been angry with us; He has mourned over us with that mysterious sorrow which is possible even in His perfect joy; but never has He despised us; never once has there been clouded from His sight that precious value of the human soul which He made, and which He so dearly loves. And so He knows us better than we know each other. While the elder brother poured contempt on the prodigal son, the father pitied and prized him, and understood him perfectly.

In this knowledge of God we all take refuge at

last. The verse with which David begins the twenty-eighth Psalm is full of this appeal: "Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord. . . . Think no scorn of me lest, if Thou makest as if Thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit." If God scorned him, there was no one left to understand and help him.

I have said that there is no scorn in God; but here is this one exception: "Surely He scorneth the scorners." We may now be able to understand something of what that scorn really is. It is a broken sympathy between Him and this one of His creatures. Into any soul that is in earnest God can enter. Only when a soul grows scornful God cannot come in; and so that soul condemns itself to be without hope and without God in the world.

It is good to know that the first condition of power is intelligence and the first condition of intelligence is the presence of respect and the absence of scorn. If you want power over men, you must understand men, and you cannot understand men unless you honor them. Nay, more,—if you want power over yourself, you must understand yourself, and you cannot understand yourself unless you honor yourself as the child of God, the brother of Christ. It is by Christ's redemption, by seeing

himself and his brother-man in Christ, that any man is rescued, first from scorn, and then from ignorance, and then from the blight of hopeless uselessness.

Let us beware of scorn. Let us never think it is a sign of wisdom. Let us watch and pray against it. We can escape it finally and fully only by entering completely into the service and spirit of Him who was "despised and rejected," but who never despised or rejected any one Himself; and whose culture for His disciples is the farthest of all things from scorn —even the faith which works by love.

> Know that pride,
> Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,
> Is littleness; that he who feels contempt
> For any living thing hath faculties
> Which he has never used; that thought with him
> Is in its infancy. The man whose eye
> Is ever on himself doth look on one,
> The least of Nature's works, one who might move
> The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
> Unlawful ever. Oh, be wiser, thou!
> Instructed that true knowledge leads to love.

O God, who resistest the proud and givest grace to the humble, grant that I, being lowly in mine own eyes, may be quick to discern what is good and honorable in all others; for Jesus Christ's sake.—Amen.

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday.

Though he be not far from every one of us.—Acts xvii., 27.

We are much more apt to think about our being near to God than about God's being near to us. When you turn yourself to religious thinking, what is it that you think of? Is it not your own experiences—the degree to which you realize truth, the warmth with which you kindle into love? Ought it not rather to be the indubitable and unalterable facts of God—what He is, how He lives, how near He is to us? The difference between a fluctuating and a stable faith is apt to lie in this: whether a Christian thinks first of God and His qualities, or thinks first of himself and his own experiences. The one anchors a soul to that which is eternal; the other launches it on the ebbing and flowing sea of uncertainty.

The largest and most fundamental thought about God, as concerns us, must be this, that He is near us,—the truth which St. Paul told the Athenians,

and which we more and more desire to tell to ourselves and to all the people who seem to be living so much of their lives as if God were not near them, but far away. . . .

The difficulty of conceiving and remembering the nearness of God comes, in the first place, from the fact that our ideas of nearness are so material. We think of things which we can see, of things which touch us, as near; and so the nearness of God is apt to sink into vague and figurative meanings. It means to us that, sitting on His far-away throne, He feels affectionately for us His children in our distant world. But we must guard against such thoughts. A real propinquity, a nearness like that with which the air presses on the skin, a nearness which is omnipresence — this is the truth which underlies all the meanings of St. Paul.

The truth of omnipresence is not easy to lay hold of, except in the simplest way. We should think of God's nearness to us as something corresponding to the closeness with which the forms of those who touch us press upon us. Unseen, unfelt by any fleshly touch, He is yet as near to us as they are. And that must mean very much to us. But we cannot rest here. We must know something of how this God who is so near to us feels towards us. For

it is possible to be so near, and yet so far away! It is so possible for our fellow-men to touch us and yet be separated from us by a wall of dislike or indifference! But the Bible revelation certainly is that God is not only near to us, but that He loves us. His Presence is a loving Presence. More than this: God loves us not by any deliberate choice of His will, as if He might have loved us or might have hated us, but He loves us because He is God. As fundamental, as eternal, as solid, a part of Himself as His Being, is His love. And so this love becomes a part of the meaning of His nearness to us. . . .

Men tell us that they delight to know that there is nothing in them which really deserves God's love. Can we not understand that? The child wants to say, "My father loves me, not because I am obedient, but because he is my father," conditioning his privilege on something deeper and more stable than his own fluctuating loyalty. So the soul wants to say, not, "I cannot serve God without His loving me," but, "God cannot be God without loving me." That builds his certainty upon the very foundation-stone of the universe.

God, then, is not only near us: that is much. He is forever loving us and trying to help us, and

this by the very necessity of His being God; that is much more. In it are involved all the relations of God to us, the sternest and most awful as well as the sweetest and tenderest. It brings our life and His close together, making them touch not merely in the softest, but the hardest places. It sets us before our Master, our Lawgiver, and our Judge. It brings no license for sin, but rather, as St. Paul says, "a fearful looking-for of judgment." To know that God loves us, to know it so that it is ever present with us, is to have entered on the richest and happiest, but also on the most serious and solemn of all human lives. . . .

But God's nearness to our lives contains a deeper relation yet, the power of personal communion and communication. This is always the profoundest sort of nearness; there can be nothing closer. You live by your friend's side, and that is help and comfort to him, the mere being his friend. Then you do something for him, and bless him still more by your active love. But the subtlest and richest relation of your life to his is not attained until, in what we call "influence," your very character and nature imparts itself to him; he grows to be what you are; he becomes you, and you he.

We want to know that this is true of God. Much,

very much, is it to us that He is close to us, closer than the friend whose hand is clasped in ours, whose breath is on our cheek. More, far more, is it that He loves us, and that He is always watching and working for our good. But most and best of all is it that His nature and ours are so truly related, we are so really made in His image, we are so natively His children, that He may impart Himself to us and make us live, by His divinity, a holy and divine life which shall not merely be like His; it shall be His life become ours by the receptivity of faith.

God is near to you. Not alone have you walked all these years of life, with all their flickering and changing lot; He has been near you every moment. Dive to the bottom of that truth. Pierce through the deepening strata of its meaning. To know of God's propinquity we need only open our eyes. To receive His love, we must set free our gratitude. To take in His character we must unfold the very depths of our nature: we must cast out our most intimate and dearest sin; we must bring our will to its sublimest task; we must believe and trust.

> Thou Life within my life, than self more near!
> Thou veilèd Presence, infinitely clear!
> From all illusive shows of sense I flee,
> To find my centre and my rest in Thee.

Take part with me against these doubts that rise
And seek to throne Thee in far-distant skies ;
Take part with me against this self that dares
Assume the burden of these sins and cares.

How shall I call Thee who art always here?
How shall I praise Thee who art still most dear?
What may I give Thee save what Thou hast given,
And whom have I but Thee in earth or heaven?

O God, who art about my path and about my bed, and in whose hand I am held ; give me grace to do all things as in Thy sight, and constantly to ask for Thy grace and guidance, as I rest in Thy goodness ; all of which I beg in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday.

And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.—2 KINGS vi., 17.

WHAT are the genuine realities, the unseen spiritual helpers, that answer to the horses and chariots that the young man saw when his eyes were opened?

In the first and most general sense, I think, spiritual help comes to us when the tasks and duties of life show us their real purpose and meanings. Each of us is engaged in doing something in this world, . . . but I do not suppose that any of us keep constantly in such sympathetic relation to our occupations that the form of our occupations does not often present itself to us as an enemy. It seems to be trying to crush us,—the routine, the drudgery, the hardship of what we have to do; we feel our life slowly being crushed out of us by the hard tyranny of our work.

And then what comes? The only thing that can defend us against the tyranny of the form is the power of the spirit of our work. In every occupation which a man has any right to be engaged in, there is a spirit which underlies the form; and it is only by appealing to the protection of the spirit that we can truly strengthen ourselves against the despotism of the form. We grow afraid of the form of everything we do, even our worship, so that the tongue falters at the formal prayer for fear lest its act of reverence should be the most irreverent. And then when the Lord opens our eyes to see the souls of these hard, formal things, and we discover how they are always trying to protect their servants from the oppression of formality, and so we take fresh courage for our tasks,—is not that, over again, the blessed vision that the Lord showed to Elisha's servant when Elisha prayed? . . . What better prayer could his best friend pray for a young man, in the sordid dangers of his common life, than just this: "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see always the spiritual meanings and purposes of the things Thou givest him to do"?

But while this is true, it is not the main thing; it would not come to much if there were not more behind it. When we speak of our spiritual helpers,

we mean most of all those actually existent beings, living a higher life than ours, the knowledge of whose existence and whose readiness to help us makes us more brave to face the dangers that we meet, because we are not facing them alone. . . . Of all such beings, whether there are only one or multitudes, One stands eternally alone, because all others get what they have to give us primarily from Him; they are His instruments and ministers. That One is God. The true unveiling of the human eye, the true sight that gives courage to a human heart, is the sight of the Divine Father standing above all our struggling life, looking down into it with love, with pity, and ready to strike down our enemies when they are too strong for us. Get what support we may out of the essential dignity and spirituality of our work itself, still its great spiritual meaning must always be that it was given us to do by God our Father. That is its real beauty. That is its true glory. And so our first discovery of spiritual help was really only an anticipation of this, —the great strength of a soul when it comes to the sight of a Father and knows that it is not fighting alone, but God watches and works for it above. It is the bewildered soldier looking up out of the dust and smoke and blood, and seeing his Captain stand-

ing calm and watchful up there, where he can survey the whole field and manage the whole battle.

And now, have we not come to this—that there are two ways to fight the great battle of life, two different kinds of fighters? One man fights in the light, another in the darkness. One man is always cognizant of the principles of the work he is engaged in, always conscious of God and of the ministries that God employs to bless and influence his life. Whenever he is afraid, these presences rise up to reassure him. Whenever the cause looks desperate, he turns to the mountain, and there are the hosts of the spiritual life. The other man knows nothing of it all; he fights a despairing battle; his heart is full of fear.

I do not say that the man who does not see these higher things is all the same as if they did not exist. I am sure that God and His angels help many a struggler who does not know where the help comes from. But when we see so many cowards who ought to be brave, so many discouraged who ought to be jubilant and certain of success; when we know what a life all these men might be living if they only really saw these things, who will not pray for every brother, "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes that he may see"? We are not asking God to make

a spiritual world for us, only to let us see it as it is. We do not pray God to love us, but we do pray that we may so see His love that we shall love Him back again, and be saved by loving.

Be your own prophet, and pray it for yourself. Let your highest needs plead with God to enlighten your lower nature, as Elisha prayed for his servant: "Lord, that I may receive my sight!"

Look down in pity, Lord, we pray,
  On eyes oppressed by moral night,
And touch the darkened lids and say
  The gracious words: "Receive thy sight!"

Then in clear daylight shall we see
  Where walks the sinless Son of God,
And, aided by new strength from Thee,
  Press onward in the path He trod.

Grant to us, O Gracious Lord, clear sight and right judgment in all things, that we may never be afraid of any danger into which Thou dost send us, nor ever be so blind that we cannot see and avail ourselves of every spiritual help and defence that Thou dost offer us. We ask it for Christ's sake.—Amen.

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday.

Who against hope believed in hope.—ROMANS iv., 18.

ALTHOUGH every natural probability was against what he desired, yet because God had told him he should have it, Abraham expected it, and by and by he received it. There were reasons for despair; all the reasons that most men would recognize compelled despair; but Abraham saw another realm of reasons lying higher up, out of which issued hope. Against the lower hope he believed in the higher hope.

Let us suppose there is a stormy morning. Everything is black and threatening. The heavy clouds hang overhead, and evidently they are so full that they may deluge us all day and not exhaust themselves. And anybody that looks simply there, who gathers evidence only from the black clouds, says, with a sombre expectation, "There is no hope. The rain is settled for the livelong day." But there is another who has collected evidence from a wider field; he has heard that the fair weather has

beaten the storm away back in the land; he has tested the winds and knows which way they blow, and to him there seems to be another prospect. He seems to see the brighter forces trooping up from afar; and, against the hope, or expectation, that is all around him, believing in the hope that opens in the distance, he makes himself ready for the work of a fair day.

We see, then, that on every subject there are two levels, or degrees, of prophecy. The prophet who stands at one of these levels predicts from the superficial forces and from the appearances of things. The prophet who stands at the other level predicts from the deeper forces and from the characters of things. And the world sees the difference between the two kinds of prophecy. It calls the first kind "shrewd." It can so completely understand it! It sees so clearly the ground on which it forms its judgments! The other kind it calls quixotic or visionary; but, in the long run, it is this latter kind of prophecy that comes true. The Egyptians see Moses leading his people out of bondage, and how hopeless it appears, with the sea before and Pharaoh behind! But Moses has a higher evidence. God has spoken to him, and sent him, and against hope he believes in hope.

So everywhere there are the higher and the lower regions of evidence. If we live in the lower, we grow gloomy and despondent. We see the discouragements that lie closest to us; we do not see the sufficient hope that lies beyond. Against such tendencies, as they creep and slide insidiously into our hearts, let us set ourselves in earnest struggle. We are not feebly to ignore the discouragements; we are to face them and give them their true value; but they must not shut from us the higher hope beyond them. They must not shut out from us God. If we can keep Him as clear before us as His old servant did, then, Abraham-like, we, too, against the worst hope can believe in the best hope always.

It is not an unreasonable thing; it is a reasonable confidence in a superior power. Perhaps, in your struggle with your own besetting sin you are discouraged. Falsehood, idleness, intemperance,—whatever it is, it is too strong for you. But if you can believe in Christ's redemption; if you can hear Him saying in the gentleness of His love, "You need not do this sin"; if you can hear Him saying in the sternness of His love, "You must not do this sin"; if in your weakness you can cast yourself upon His strength; then, though everything may seem to

go against you, it shall still be possible for you to hope in Him, and to be safe.

This higher hopefulness is nowhere more important than in the work which every good man tries to do for his fellow-men. He who lives only in the lower hope expects men to be base, deceitful, and degraded, and he is apt enough to find them, and, so far as his power goes, to make them, what he expects them to be. He who lives in the higher hope believes that men may be true and faithful and industrious and godly, and his work is always tending to make them so. Believe in men, and then you can help them. Do not be blind to what they really are, but all the while believe in what they have the power to be. They are the sons of God. Do not merely tell them that, but think that of them truly, and your hands shall be strong to help them.

Everywhere the higher hopefulness is what we want. There is a hopefulness that is lower and weaker than despair; it shuts its eyes to facts, and hopes without evidence. But there is another hopefulness that is as much stronger and wiser than despair as sunlight is greater than darkness; it has opened its eyes to larger facts and, keeping company with God, it sees everything from His standpoint.

For the world, for our brethren, for ourselves, let us have that higher hope.

> Nor is he far astray who deems
> That every hope, which rises and grows broad
> In the world's heart, by ordered impulse streams
> From the great heart of God.

And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly my hope, for myself and for all who are dear to me, is even in Thee. Let me not be confounded, but grant to my hope steadfastness in time, and a blessed fruition in eternity, according to Thy holy will: Through Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Friday after the Fifth Sunday.

And he called unto the man clothed with the linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.—EZEKIEL ix., 3, 4.

WHAT seems most significant and striking in this story is the sort of test by which the Saviour was to be guided in marking the men of Jerusalem who were to escape. Who are they on whose foreheads the mark of privilege is to be set? It is those who sorrow for the city's sins. The lighter natures grieve for lighter things; the deeper natures only are capable of the deeper sorts of grief.

St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, has a very noble treatment of the different kinds of regret, and of their influence upon character. He is speaking, indeed, rather of sorrow for their own sins, but no man can really be oppressed by his own sin without looking up and doubling his sorrow by the sight of

the sinfulness of the whole world. St. Paul says: "I rejoice not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort. For godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." There is a sorrow so selfish, so sentimental, or so cynical, that it is in itself an addition to the sin that it sorrows for, and is worthy of nothing but to be repented of. There is a way of saying, "How bad I am!" so weak and unresolved that it makes you worse. There is a way of saying, "How wicked the world is!" so bitter and unpractical that it makes the world wickeder. There is nothing godly, nothing divine, in such sorrow. It is of the world and worketh death.

The only sorrow that is good is that which practically repents, and sets to work to get rid of the wickedness over which it grieves. It is not pleasant to think, in all the loose, purposeless meditation upon sins which seems to many of us to be the work of Lent,—a work which never grows into any strong muscle of repentance and resolution,—to think how much there must be which seems good, but which is only bad; how much regret for our past lives which is so weak that it can only lay up more regret for the part of our lives yet to come.

If we realized the true unity of life, the way in which every sentiment has its appropriate action belonging to it, without which it is not complete, then it would be enough to insist upon the mere sentiment of sorrow, sure that if that were reached it would body itself forth in action. But now we have such a fatal power of stopping short in sentimentalism! Sin looks hateful to us; it seems terrible, as we sit in our cozy parlors and read our newspapers, that all these dreadful iniquities are going on all about us. Why can they not stop? How lovely the world would be if they did stop! Oh, that it would begin to-morrow, and all this misery and strife be stilled forever!

Is that what Ezekiel meant when he talked about the men "that sigh and that cry for the abominations that be done in the midst thereof"? Does he not certainly mean men who will do something about it? We are sure that the sorrowers for the abominations of Jerusalem who received the mark of rescue, if we could know them, would be the men who had worked the hardest to keep Jerusalem pure, and whose own hearts had witnessed the profoundest struggles with their own wickedness.

See how St. Paul goes on to speak of the true sorrow for sin that those Corinthians of his really

did possess. He tells of the divine influence that it had exercised in them: "For, behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge!" Thoughtfulness, honesty, energy, eagerness, thoroughness—all these the man will have who is so large-souled and large-minded as to look around and take it seriously to himself that the world is lying in wickedness. This is the spirit in which all true reformers have lived; not only the men whose names are bright upon the monuments of great public reforms, but the men everywhere who in private have sighed and cried for the abominations that are done, and have tried in some humble way to make them a little less abominable. Other men have said: "What is it to you? Do your duty, and let the world answer for itself. Live your own life." Happily there are men who, in this larger, Christian Jerusalem, in this great city of a common humanity, cannot settle down easily upon any most perfect virtue of their own; they must sigh and cry for the world's abominations. That is the mark of their higher salvation.

Think of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, sinless, yet

with the gloom of sin blacker than night upon Him, groaning and sweating great drops of blood. What does it mean? It is pure grief. He is "bearing our sins." Oh, the deep, unfound meaning of those words! This Divine vicariousness which took man's sins upon itself so that, in the deep words of St. Paul, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,"—that never can be told, but the sight of it has been the power that touched men everywhere.

We, too, may enter into that vicarious power and bear the world's sin as He bore it. It will not make smooth and easy lives for us. We shall be men of sorrows like Him. It is not pleasant to stand with such a naked sensitiveness in this wicked world that all its wickedness thrills us with pain. It is not pleasant, but it is good for us. We, too, live as it were with the mark of the cross upon us; but that cross is the mark of the highest life, of the completest salvation.

And at last that same sign, deepened by a whole life of struggle, that cross upon the forehead that shows how on earth one bore, like Christ, a deep and constant sorrow for the sinful world, and waged, like Christ, a hard and constant struggle that the world might be freed from sin, shall be the ever-

lasting token of salvation in the other world: "And they shall see Him face to face, and His name shall be in their foreheads."

May this Lent do something as real as this for us. May it sign us with the sign of the cross, that hereafter we may not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto our life's end.

Sink in, thou blessed sign!
Pass all my spirit through,
And sever with thy sacred touch
The hollow from the true. . . .

Through my heart's very ground
Thy ploughshare must be driven,
Till all are better loved than self,
And yet less loved than heaven.

O Holy and Merciful Saviour, who of Thy tender pity didst condescend to suffer death upon the cross for me, give me grace both to realize the awfulness of sin by the depth of Thy suffering, and also to love Thee more truly, and follow Thee more faithfully; for Thy mercy's sake.—Amen.

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday.

Then Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written . . . concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.—LUKE xviii., 31.

EVERY true life has its Jerusalem, to which it is always going up. At first far-off and dimly seen, laying but slight hold on our purpose and our will, then gradually taking us more and more into its power, compelling our study, directing the current of our thought,—so every live man's Jerusalem, his sacred city, calls to him from the hilltop on which it stands. One man's Jerusalem is his profession. Another man's Jerusalem is his fortune. Another man's is his faith, and another's is his character. You say to each of them, "What are you doing? What is it all for?" And the answer is everywhere the same: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem."

The man who is going up to no Jerusalem is but the ghost and relic of a man. He has in him no genuine and healthy life.

There never was an exhibition of all this so fine and perfect as that which we see in Jesus. His manhood shines out nowhere so clear and strong as here. Think how His life gets its glory and beauty from the way in which it is always, from the very first, tending on to the thing which it was at last to reach. That tendency began at His birth, and it never ceased until . . . in the tragedy of Good Friday He laid down His life. He had reached Jerusalem at last. The most intense, persistent purpose that the world has ever seen had reached its completion. When He came there, and the Cross seized and held Him, character and circumstances had perfectly met in their complete result.

Would it not be a vast thing for us if we could be far more aware than we now are of some such great, Christ-like sweep of our lives towards a purpose? A friend comes to you and says, "Do this with me." And you quietly reply to him, "I cannot. I am going up to Jerusalem." There is an end of it. You have not to sit on a stone at the roadside, until you have decided just whether the thing is wrong, and just how wrong it is. Simply the thing is not on your way to Jerusalem, and so you press on and leave it far behind.

And this power of our purpose, this attraction of

Jerusalem, is not destroyed,—nay, is not weakened,—nay, is intensified and strengthened, when the veil is lifted and it is distinctly shown to us that our purpose can be attained only by struggle and self-sacrifice and pain. Oh! this is a wonderful power in man, this power which shines supremely in the Man of men, this power to be inspired by danger, and to desire a good and great thing all the more because of the deserts and the fire and the death which must be gone through for its attainment.

We hear it said sometimes that it was wonderful that Jesus, having undertaken the world's salvation, did not draw back at the sight of the cross. Would it not have been more wonderful if, being Jesus, He had drawn back and refused to go up to Jerusalem because of what was waiting for Him there? Can we imagine that? I think the same is true of all souls who have really seen their Jerusalem and have set their faces towards it. I do not expect them—they ought not to expect themselves—to be turned back by the difficulties and dangers which stand in the way. The wonders of life are not in deeds, but in characters. Given the character, the deed does not surprise me. It would be wonderful if you or I should write a *Hamlet*. It was not wonderful that Shakespeare should do it. The wonder is that he

should be Shakespeare; but, being Shakespeare, *Hamlet* is no miracle. . . .

What does this mean for us? What is its bearing on our lives? Something very direct and definite. If you are going up to Jerusalem, and as you go you become aware that you can only reach your Jerusalem, your purpose, through suffering, perhaps through death,—what then? Where shall you look for release, and the solution of your fear? Shall you expect it in the change of circumstances, in the muzzling of the lions, or in the palsying of death? No! you must seek it in the strengthening of your own life, so that it shall be nothing strange for you, being the man you are, to scorn the lions and laugh at death.

Oh, do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men! Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers; pray for powers equal to your tasks! Then the doing of your work will be no miracle. But you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of the life which has come to you by the grace of God.

If your Jerusalem really is your sacred city, there is certainly a cross in it. What then? Shall you flinch and draw back? Shall you ask for yourself another life? Oh, no! not another life, but another

self. Ask to be born again. Ask God to fill you with Himself, and then calmly go up to Jerusalem expecting that all things which are written concerning you will be fulfilled. Disappointment, mortification, misconception, enmity, pain, death,—these may come to you, but if they come to you in doing your duty it is all right.

"It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem," said Jesus Christ. "It is dreadful to suffer except in doing duty; to suffer there is glorious" —that is our translation of His words into our own life.

Go from the east to the west, as the sun and the stars direct thee;
Go with the girdle of man, go and encompass the earth;
Not for the gain of the gold, for the getting, the hoarding, the having,
But for the joy of the deed, but for the duty to do.

O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people who call upon Thee; and grant that they may both perceive the things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Amen.

Sixth Sunday in Lent.

And the multitudes that went before and followed cried, saying, . . . Hosanna to the Son of David! . . . Hosanna in the highest.—MATT. xxi., 9.

SURROUNDED by His disciples, Jesus Christ crossed the Mount of Olives, and was met by a crowd of people who came out of the city of Jerusalem to welcome Him. He whose lot it was to be "despised and rejected of men" was hailed and applauded by them.

There can be little doubt what was in His heart as He rode among the excited crowd. There must have been a sense of fitness, a pleasure in hearing His essential, kingly nature acknowledged with applause that rang around the rocks and down through the streets of the sacred city. Still, while He welcomed the external utterance, He must have been supremely conscious that not it, but the internal fact, was the real thing. It was good that these shouting, excited men should call Him the Son of

God; yet not that they called Him so, but that He was the Son of God, was what lay the closest to His heart. That consciousness which had sustained and comforted Him in the darkest times was the real light that burned within Him as He rode in triumph. The spiritual supremacy was the valuable thing. Without that, all these ascriptions of royalty would have been as nothing.

That which represents in our personal life the great event of Palm Sunday, is the entrance of the authority of Christ into a man's soul. It would be easy, without fancifulness, to trace out the analogy in detail, but that we need not do. This part of it, at least, is clear: that the entrance of Christ into a soul's life has, like His approach to the sacred city, its outward exhibition and its inward meaning. The formal utterance, the symbolic and sacramental acceptance of Him, and all the outwardness of the Christian profession and the Christian life,— these correspond to the outbursting shouts, the hosannas, the demonstrative greetings that hailed the Lord's approach and owned His majesty. He values them. He does not count them worthless. There is a fitness between them and the dignity of Him who comes. They keep the true relation between the inward and the outward. But always,

while He accepts the outward, we know that what is most important of all to the coming Saviour is the inward which this outward represents. The spiritual owning of His spiritual Lordship, the heart accepting the heart's Master,—this is what He never forgets to care for. No outward symbols of submission can take its place.

We are too apt to lose one in our care for the other. The outward, ceremonious acceptance of the Saviour loses the importance of the heart's obedience; or the spiritual experience makes us think the sacramental utterance of no account. Sometimes it is the palm-branch without the heart: sometimes, which is better, but is partial still, it is the heart without the palm-branch. Not always does the Christian keep, as the soul of Jesus kept, the essential connection and just proportion between the two.

But let us turn to another event that occurs while Christ is still upon the mountain. "When He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" His triumph turns first of all into pity. Never was His heart so tender, perhaps, as when He sat in His loftiness and looked down upon the

streets where the poor people whom He loved were living. His own exaltation seemed to make their misery all the more real and dreadful to Him. . . . See how many of the privileged people of the world, as they have passed up higher and higher into privilege, have seemed to go farther and farther away from the common lot of mortals, and from sympathy with it; and then you will see how Divine a thing in Christ it was that the most triumphant moment of His life was the tenderest. It lets us understand that the tenderest heart in all the universe is the supreme, the exalted Heart; that there is no pity anywhere like the pity of God.

And what a rebuke is here to many of us! Ask your own heart if, as you have understood more deeply what it is to live to Christ, as this world has been made brighter and the next world nearer to you by His love, you have grown quicker or slower to pity the sin of the most sinful, and to feel tolerantly for the doubt of the most bewildered soul. Has your faith drawn you closer to or separated you farther from the faithless, the hopeless? These are the questions that make us feel how Divine was the way in which Christ's triumph melted instantly into pity. The more brilliantly He was shown to be the Son of God, the nearer He came to all His Father's

children; the more intensely He felt their degradation, the more He longed to help them.

Thus it is that we briefly picture the approach of Christ to our souls under the figure of His entrance into Jerusalem. He loves us as He loved that city, with a love full of tenderness, but also of reproach and accusation. He stops as He comes in sight of us, and beholds the city of our will and weeps over it. And so He claims our hearts. There is something in every one of them that says to Him, "Come in!" There is something, too, in every one of them that rises up at His coming and bids Him "Begone!"

But the struggle in any heart cannot go on forever. It must decide. It must say decisively, "Come" or "Go." Let us open our hearts to Him now, today. Come in, O Christ, and pity us! Come in, O Christ, and save us!

> As the wide water spreadeth on the land,
> With mighty softness taking every place,
> Until the flood alone doth all-wheres stand;
> So doth the Presence of the King at hand
> In mildest conquest make its way apace,
> Till all is held and mastered by His grace.

O Lord Jesus Christ, grant me grace to watch for every coming of Thine, and to know the things that belong to my peace, that I may show the fruit of Thy patient love, and see Thy full salvation.—Amen.

Monday in Holy Week.

Thou heardest them, O Lord our God; Thou forgavest them, O God, and punishedst their own inventions.—PSALM xcix., 8. (Prayer-book Version.)

IT is a strange, old-fashioned word, or sense of a word, which is used here to describe men's sins,—"inventions." A man's inventions, in this sense, are the ways of living which he has found out for himself. They are the utterances of his self-will. They are his misdeeds, his obstinacies, his sins. See, then, what David says: God forgives His people, but He punishes their sins.

There is a clear discrimination here, which our loose thought and talk about forgiveness is very apt to disregard. A man commits a sin. That sin, when committed, has a true, substantial existence. Though the man who committed it dies, the sin still goes on in its consequences. Suppose that the man does not die, but repents. When he repents, he is forgiven, but what becomes of his sin? That

is a living thing, and that, David says, God punishes. The man forgiven and the sin punished,—that is the discrimination of the Psalmist.

You did a sin years ago, and it was one of those sins which leave their mark. Some twist, some ache, some weakness, mental or physical, stayed behind as the record and the consequence of the sin. You have repented; you have asked God's forgiveness, and you know that He has forgiven you. But when the bright angel of His mercy came bringing you your pardon, did he touch and heal the consequence of your sin? Certainly not! Does the conflagration stop when the conscience-stricken incendiary cries out to God in penitence? Does the cruel ocean cease beating the great ship to pieces on the rocks when the wrecker sees too late the awfulness of his crime? Does the dimmed reputation shine out at once the moment that the cruel scandal is repented of?

When God forgave you, He forgave you perfectly. But your "invention" He is punishing by letting it work out its consequences and so show its hatefulness. And how good that is! How it keeps the sense and importance of the sin from melting easily away in the free atmosphere of pardon, while at the same time it lifts the soul into the higher and subtler

and more spiritual motive which comes from grateful love for the Forgiver. Your sin, in some part of its power, is still going on. Men whom you never saw are finding the world a little lower-toned, a little more full of temptation, because of it. The wreck out of which you were snatched on our New England coast may be sinking ships to-day in other seas. . . . Where are the men who did the wicked deeds in the midst of the consequences of which we live? Where are the untrue thinkers, the base livers, the corrupt statesmen, who sowed the seeds the bitter fruits of which we are reaping in intellectual, social, and national life? Perhaps, having repented, some of them are now living pure lives on earth; perhaps they have passed into the perfect life. Wherever they are, whatever they are, it is their "inventions" which God is punishing in our cramped and suffering lives to-day.

It is good for us to know that the reverse of this is also true. As the bad man may repent and turn to goodness, and yet the evil which he has sent forth into the world live on; so a man may do good, and no fall of his into sin afterwards can stop the good which he has done, as it goes on in widening circles to bless the world. Thank God that every stroke of faithful work that you

do is not tied for its effectiveness and permanence to the chances of your unstable character. Where could we get courage to do anything were it so tied? It must be a power of great inspiration to us all that, however we may go wrong, God will not fail to keep alive any good which we have ever done.

To all this subject one truth is fundamental,—the distinction between the man and his experiences. Many people know no self but the record of their experience. When some one asks them, or they ask themselves, "What are you?" instead of describing their natures and enumerating their qualities, they simply tell over what has come to them. Do you not see the difference? Talk to two men, to whom great trouble or sorrow came ten years ago. One holds it as a remembered event, the other as an element in his character. The first may seem to be most mindful of it; he may keep more of its sadness in his face; but the second has the real strength and essence of it in his soul, in the form of new faith, patience, hope, and courage. If they were both to pass through Lethe, and forget the event altogether, the first man would stand on the other side exactly the same man as if it had never happened; the second would be a different man because of it forever.

The same thing is true of our sins. I will not take one shade from the dark picture that I tried to draw of the persistency, the long, long consequences of the sin you have committed; nevertheless, to have your whole life clouded by the thought that somewhere God is punishing your sin to-day,—that is not your duty nor your right with reference to that sin. The best fruit of any sin that you ever committed is not a cloud of misery cast over your life; it is a deep repentance, an assured forgiveness, a new heart, a new start, a brave struggle to be another man and lead another life. The sailor must not sit down dolefully on the beach, and picture to himself the mischief which his drifting wreck may be doing on the seas. To put his rescued manhood into a new ship and, with all the skill of rich experience, sail on new, more hopeful, more successful voyages,—that is the sailor's duty, that is his right.

Forgiveness means all this. It is not the simple lifting off of penalty. It is the forth-giving of God Himself to man, in all His power of inspiring happiness, of recreating character, of truly saving the soul. It never can be anything but terrible to have sinned in this world, where to have lived sinlessly would have been such a glory and delight; but the

very terribleness of our having sinned must make God, in His pity, more ready to forgive us if we repent.

So may He find us all repentant, and forgive us for our sins to-day!

Trembling before Thee, we fall down to adore Thee;
Shamefaced and sorrowing, we lift our eyes to Thee;
O First and with the last, annul our ruined past,
Rebuild us to Thy glory, set us free
From sin and from sorrow to fall down and worship Thee.

O Lord God, who art inexhaustible in mercy and infinite in power, cast the mantle of Thy forgiveness over my sins, I beseech Thee; and grant that my penitence and prayers may presently hinder and finally destroy their evil consequences; through the might and merits of the all-sufficing death of Thy beloved Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.—Amen.

Tuesday in Holy Week.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord.—MATT. xxv., 21.

THESE words open the great future, and show its laws and the close ties that bind it to the most trivial present. They show us a soul passing from one period or stage of existence into another, and let us see the method of such a graduation; and so they teach us some deep lessons of the progress and the unity of human life.

We are forever dreaming of a completeness and a roundness in the world's life and our own life which never comes. We are always looking for the time when civilization and our personal experience shall settle down complete and finished, and this endless restlessness and outreaching change be over. It does not come, yet after a thousand disappointments we are always hoping for it still. Always just before us there is some period which is to be the perfect period, when this fermentation is to

stop. We seem to live so at loose ends! Shall the time never come when all shall be folded in, and the life comprehend itself, and thenceforth, orderly and self-contained, go on doing a work which it completely understands in a way with which it is completely satisfied?

But the only completeness of one period of life that we have any right to expect consists in preparation for another. These dissatisfactions, this unrest, these lower ends, are part of the soul's development. "Forward" is the law of life. The moment that we say to our soul, "Take thine ease," we have been faithless to our soul's design.

Think of your own life. You have worked hard; you have been faithful, and at last set your feet upon some attainment which is going to give you rest, in which you are going to be satisfied. But the satisfaction has not come. The new attainment has only developed new unrest. What does it mean? What but just this: that the reward of the attainment is not repose, but a wider prospect and a new ambition? He that has been faithful over a few things is not bidden to sit down in the conquered land and just enjoy it, but hears a voice of God bidding him to be up and enter into some new joy of his Lord.

Remember that we are speaking only of one kind of progress—the growth in character, the development of the very nature of the soul itself. God has His clear and certain method by which, in making our souls better and purer, He keeps them under one sort of training until they have gathered out of it the best that it can give them, and then opens the door and admits them to another training which is to furnish them with some new grace of which they have become capable by the experience through which they have already passed. It is a question of character entirely. It is not what men have done, but what they have become, that makes them subjects of the higher life.

"Enter into the joy of thy Lord," the soul hears as it is summoned to a fuller life. What is the joy of God? As concerns us, one thing and only one—our goodness. Not our activity, not our intelligence, but to see us growing more and more like Himself, purer, truer, more loving,—this is the sight in us that sends a new current of joy through the perfect happiness of the perfectly happy God. To reach by His grace, by His training, some new measure of His holiness, to recognize it and begin to use it and rejoice in it as His gift; to lift up our hearts with the same happiness that fills His heart

when a new temptation is conquered and a new purity reached,—this is to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Is it not evident that it is something that may come to us in this life, and that does not need the final change of death? Can you picture any nobler condition than for a soul to be rejoicing with God in the work that God has done in it? "Glory to Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast thus uplifted me and purified me! Now give me what new light and purity this which Thou hast already given me has made it possible for me to receive!" That is to enter into the joy of the Lord.

And in what a noble and healthy attitude this view sets a man towards his own past life! He is neither eager to forget it, nor fond and foolish in dreaming over it to the neglect of the present or the future. The present and the future give the past all its value, and, gathering out of its blunders and wisdom, its failures and its successes, such character as by the grace of God he can, he goes bravely forward to turn another untried future into a richer and more fruitful past. This is the happy, healthy life of the obedient child of God.

How is such a life possible? Only in one way; only by counting our lives not ours, but God's; only by cordially recognizing every day and every hour

that the God who made us so wonderfully, and redeemed us so terribly by the cross of Christ, must be valuing and training the precious souls that He has saved; only by looking for His training, and never setting our wills against it; only by being perfectly submissive to every movement of the Holy Spirit. So, being His, not our own, He living in us, He working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, we cannot but go on, and, with every little or great change that comes to us, find ourselves entering into some new joy of our Lord.

Just to recollect His love,
  Always true,
Always shining from above,
  Always new;
Just to recognize its light
  All-enfolding,
Just to claim its present might,
  All-upholding;
Just to know it as thine own,
  That no power can take away,—
Is not this enough alone
  For the gladness of the day?

My Lord and God, give me more and more a sense of Thy sacred Presence by me and in me, that I may be faithful over the few or many things which Thou mayest entrust to me, and so fail not to enter into Thy joy here, and still more hereafter; all of which I ask for the Redeemer's sake.—Amen.

Wednesday in Holy Week.

And David longed and said, Oh, that one would give me to drink of the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate! And three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord.—2 SAMUEL xxiii., 15, 16.

As it had flowed out of the spring by the gate of Bethlehem, it had been mere common water; but as these brave men held it there before the king, it represented the noble lives which they had ventured for it. It was no longer mere water to him. It seemed to grow red with value in the cup. "Is it not the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" cried David. And then, with an exquisite religious feeling which surpassed his heroes' chivalry by the only act which could have been greater than theirs, and which proved him worthy of being the master of such men, he poured it out unto the Lord.

One beauty that we find in the story is the clear perception, on the part both of the heroes and of David, that there may be a value of circumstances and associations about things, which is of far greater importance than the value that may be said to belong to them in themselves. The water was more than water to the heroes because their king wanted it; the water was as precious as blood and life to the king because his heroes had risked their lives to get it. Is it not true that, as you look over the possessions that you treasure most, you find that there is in every one of them some preciousness, and generally the largest and dearest part, which has not come from the inherent value of the thing itself, but from the associations which have gathered round it, and especially from what you have suffered or risked in connection with it?

Take the house you live in, for example. If you have lived in it long, has it not a value for you entirely apart from its worth as real estate? Or take abstract things. I pity the man who can see in great moral principles, in liberty and justice and truthfulness and mercy, nothing beside their own intrinsic worth; to whom they do not become consecrated and doubly dear for all the pain that they have passed through to reach us, and for all the

human value that they have won by the great men that have given their lives for them.

We come, then, to this: that it is the experiences of our lives that are truly valuable. It is our sorrow and our joy, our exaltations and enthusiasms, that are really so much to us. External objects, our houses, our businesses, our churches, our nation, and abstract objects, truth, purity, and justice, are comparatively nothing to us except as they represent some genuine association with our lives.

It is thus that lives grow richer as they grow older. So long as a man really lives, he is continually establishing new relations with all the things about him. Every year some new object becomes representative and suggestive of some deep experience of life. One year his business becomes glorified with all the spiritual discipline of threatened failure and restored prosperity. Another year his family life is deepened and softened by bereavement. Again, his country's danger lifts patriotism into a passion. And yet, again, his body grows sacred to him by the mysterious touch of God in sickness. Always there is a new value coming into things which sinks the old and makes them new to him.

Notice that in this kind of values there is always

some mysterious sort of sacredness which comes from the impossibility of estimating its exact value. No price can pay off claims like these. You must be able to appraise affection, gratitude, passions, fears, resolutions, before you can tell how much value is added to the object of your love by the suffering that it has cost you or some benefactor of yours, or by the spiritual experiences of any kind with which it is connected.

But we can go much higher than this. Why is it that the Redemption is so precious to us? Not only for the untold worth of the thing itself, not only for the wisdom and the grace that it revealed, but also for the pain that it cost. The Gospel of Salvation, the great hope for the sons of men in Christ, was gathered out of the midst of suffering and danger by the Son of Man Himself. This has been the mighty power of the offer everywhere: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ." Men, looking into their religion, have seen not merely the glory of the heaven that was offered them, but, as the heart and core of its attractiveness, the agony of the Calvary that it cost; and that is what makes them love it so. As they raised the cup of promise

to their lips, they found it filled not simply with the water of life, but with the blood of the Lamb. Immediately there rose before them the picture of their Champion, going out for them in the midst of the enemy, tempted, assailed, and suffering, treading alone the weary leagues that lay between their souls and pardon, then coming back with the priceless fruit of it all held in His victorious hands, and saying to the thirsty souls for whom He bore it all, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood."

Who spake the words? Didst Thou?
They are too good even for such a Giver:
Such water, drinking once, I must feel ever
As I had drunk but now!

O soul, O soul, rejoice!
Thou art God's child indeed, for all thy sinning;
A poor, weak child, yet His, and worth the winning
With Saviour deed and voice.

Grant, O Merciful Saviour, that all souls who thirst for the water of life may be filled from Thine abundance, to the glory of Thy holy Name.—Amen.

Thursday in Holy Week.

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?—JOHN vi., 43, 51, 52.

THE nurture of the soul by the communicated life of God, — that is what Christ is talking of. Earth and man seem to lie open in their need, with all their ordinary concealments stripped away; heaven and God are open in their readiness to supply. All reserve is broken and the power of life, the manifested mercy of God, is offering itself to the want of men. In the very midst of this sacred offer comes this question: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

The whole expression which called out the question is figurative through and through. The bread, even though turned into sacred flesh, is still to be eaten by the bodily mouth for spiritual purposes,

and it seems impossible to bridge over the gap in the idea between the physical and spiritual nourishment without some analogy or figure. The figure is very vivid and graphic, so clear and sharp that it sometimes seems as if there were no figure there; as if it were the statement of the baldest material fact, but it is figurative nevertheless.

And the general spirit of the figure is clear; it means support or strength. And food means a certain kind of strength. It is strength incorporated, not strength applied. You see the difference. . . . There is the strength of a buttress which sustains a tower, or of a rock on which the tower is set. That is outward strength. There is the strength of food which supports the man by becoming the man. That is inward strength. And that is the sort of strength which Christ promises in the gift of Himself. Thus much is clear in the word "eat." We easily distinguish between the two sorts of strength, and the latter is the more intimate and personal. The outer strength is the strength of the prop and the buttress; the inner strength is the strength of the life-blood in the veins.

You have a hard duty to do, something which you thoroughly hate to do. Your reluctance makes

you weak. But you must do it because it is God's will, and so your duty. You do not expect to try to escape, but you cry out to God to strengthen you; and He has two ways of answering your prayer, one better than the other, which He uses according as He finds you open and fit for the lesser or the larger mercy. He may bring all His commandments and penalties and lay them up like buttresses against the weak wall of your resolution, and crowd you into duty by the pressure of compulsion and fear. Or He may fill you with Himself, make you love Him so that you shall, as the Collect so beautifully prays, "love the thing that He commands," and so grow into duty by the inspiration of His character, His standards, His life, which have become yours by love. . . . That is the inner strength. That is the strength of food.

And notice how this last alone is vital. It alone makes life. It lives. The buttress keeps the dead wall standing, but the sap makes the live tree more alive with growth. So compulsion and fear keep us true to duty, but love makes us larger and fit for greater duty every day. Every vital strength must be the strength which incorporates itself with the very thing that it supports. Except we eat we have no life in us. . . . Christ is the Staff we

lean on, the Rock we stand on, the Light that leads us, the Master on whose breast we lie; but He is also the Bread of Life. He says, "Lean on Me; stand on Me; take hold of Me and walk"; but when He utters His deepest word, it is this: "Feed on Me; unless you feed on Me you have no life in you."

But what is this strength of Christ that comes to us,—the strength which, by a beautiful incorporation with the disciple's weakness, becomes his strength? . . . It must be that holiness which was in Jesus of Nazareth, and which we, because we are of the same humanity that He wore, are capable of possessing and developing. This is the strength of which we eat, and which like a true food enters into us, and becomes truly ours while it is still His.

And this brings us to the understanding of that word "flesh." The flesh was the expression of the human life of Jesus. [There are wonderful] acts that Jesus did. Take the more wonderful Being, lying behind them all, which Jesus *was*, and see how that, in its perfect consecration, in its consecrated perfectness, became clear and imitable to men; how men began to believe that they might be that divine thing too, when they saw it in the Incarnate God, in Christ; and then you can understand

something of how only in the flesh could God thus present Himself for the most intimate entrance into man; so you can know something of what Jesus Christ meant when He bade the hungry human soul to eat of His flesh.

How high that hunger and its satisfaction are! You long for God to come and be within you, to rule you, to fill you. . . . You look on high, and God is too mighty. You look close by your side, and Jesus Christ, the God Incarnate, has the very words you need: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in Him."

But there is one thing more. This giving of His own flesh for food is always spoken of in connection with the great Sacrifice of the flesh in which He gave it to us. Do not lose sight of what the Bible tells you, that it is the death of Christ that saves the world; nor of what your own heart must tell you, if you let it speak, that it is only when you see this Saviour dying to show a love for you which nothing short of death could utter—only then that the soul opens wide enough to take Him in completely to be its life and its salvation. That entrance of His life into you shall give you strength and nourishment you never knew before. Then you shall know in growing, dependent, delighted

strength, more and more every day, the answer to the old, ever-new question: "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"

Saviour, Thou art the Bread of Life;
Renew our strength, supply our need;
Be Thou our trust, our joy, our hope,
Blest Food, on which Thy children feed!

We cannot live without Thee, Lord;
Hungering and thirsting, faint we fall;
Give us this day our daily Bread;
Be Thou our Life, our Light, our All!

O Thou whose pity ever takes away the sins of the world, take away our sin, and be glorified in us.

Thou who hast prepared for them that love Thee things which it enters not into the heart of man to conceive, grant us in Thyself more than we can ask or think.

Be to us a Healer of all sickness and unsoundness, and in our spiritual life food, and in our conscience peace.

O Thou who alone makest all contradictions clear, in Thy light let us see light.

Thou whose name is Saviour, pour forth grace upon Thy servants and visit us with salvation.—Amen.

Good Friday.

And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head.—MATT. xxvii., 29.

THIS is Christ's Coronation Day. It is the most impressive illustration in all the world of the perpetual truth that it is not what men do, or what happens to them, but it is what they are who do the things, or to whom the things happen, that makes the real importance of events, the eternal superiority of character to circumstance.

That which gives its supreme and solitary importance to the suffering of Good Friday is the nature of the Sufferer. It is the Son of God that men are putting to death upon the cross. That is what makes it powerful to reach down across the centuries, and be as real to you and me to-day as it was to the men and women who were actually present on Calvary. What happens to God has no time, and so belongs to all time. When a king suffers, all the history of his kingdom feels the pang. Its influence is as extensive and deathless as his royalty.

Then there comes in the truth of His genuine, true share in our human nature. It is part and parcel of His kingliness. Just as it is part of the kingliness of a great monarch not merely that he comes of royal stock and that he has the royal spirit, but also that he is of the stock of the people over whom he is set, so it is part of the royalty of Jesus Christ that it is human flesh on which the crown of thorns is set, that it is human blood that streams from the wounds, and that they are human affections which, craving for sympathy, are wounded and beaten back by ingratitude and insult. That is the great, central fact of the Incarnation, to which we want to cling forever. Whatever else may be dark in the mystery of God made Man, that must be forever bright to us. Christ was so truly man that He could suffer humanly.

This, then, is the meaning of the strange, unconscious symbolism with which the brutal Roman soldiers set upon the Saviour's head the crown of thorns. To them it meant the mere mockery of certain claims to royalty which they had heard that He asserted. To us it means the Saviour's right and will and power to be the world's King, and to be our King, not by pomp and luxury and ease, but by suffering. The whole life, the whole death,

of Christ are full of this assertion of Himself as the true satisfaction, in deeper and more spiritual ways, of those desires for which men have sought superficial satisfactions. Men have sought for truths; lo! here is the Truth, but it is the truth of a nature. Men have wanted a law; lo! here is the Law fulfilled and completed in a Life. Men have offered sacrifices for sin; lo! here is a Sacrifice, but it offers Itself. It is a Brother giving His warm life freely for His brethren. Men have wanted a king; lo! here is a King, but it is not a royalty that rules by force and splendor, but by disgrace and pain. Everywhere the life of Christ displays the realities of which we often have but the counterfeits; and nowhere more than here. We have the outside forms of power. We know what it is to control the actions, the words, to some extent the thoughts, of men; but it is the suffering Christ who opens underneath all these powers a power infinitely deeper. To change men's hearts, to take out of them the sins which they have learned to think a part of their very lives and selves, to make them first repentant and then holy,—this is the power of the suffering Saviour, this is the consummation of every inferior idea of power in the royalty of the crown of thorns.

Now, what, for us, is this symbol which belongs to the forenoon of Good Friday?

If, behind all the other powers that control our lives, deeper than all the other forces which we feel shaping us from day to day, there is one supreme Power which is the Master not only over our words and deeds, but over our very characters and souls, —a power that comes to us from the Son of God suffering for us,—then, in our loyal submission to that power is our subjectship to the crown of thorns.

Count to-day the masters, the splendid, triumphant, often arrogant, masters, whom the world acknowledges: is there One whom the world neglects, but whose power over you makes the power of all the rest seem weakness? Is there One, gentle, patient, unoffended by delay, always ready to give you the blessing of His sway when you will let Him, One with the look of pain beneath the look of love on His face? Is there such a One who, more than any other master, rules your life by the simple, strong claim that when you were a sinner He died for you? Other forces turn your steps hither and thither; this force alone, the love of the suffering Christ, controls you to be essentially the man or woman that you are, gives you strength to struggle with your sins, to seek holiness, to lay hold on eternal life.

Remember that all which the kings of the earth feel as onerous duty or selfish ambition this one King feels as a Brother's longing for your soul. There is a deep joy in His loving heart, where still the memory of His sufferings on earth must abide, when you devote yourself to Him in love and loyalty.

To-day is His Coronation Day. To-day, in His suffering anew remembered, make Him anew your King; and more of His strength, more of His goodness, more of His light and life, will come into your obedient heart.

Witness to the truth!
Crowned by Thy witnessing, Thou art the King!
With Thee I die, to live in worshipping.
O human God! O Brother, eldest born!
Never but Thee was there a Man in sooth!
Never a true crown but Thy crown of thorn!

On the dead, for whom Thou diedst, Lord Jesus, have mercy.

On the living, for whom Thou ever livest, have mercy.

Thou who wast arraigned before an unjust judge, O incorruptible Judge, have mercy.

Thou who knowest what is in man, O Son of Man, have mercy.

Thou who art unlike us in Thy sinlessness, have mercy.

Thou who art like us in Thy humanity, on us, Thy brethren and sisters, have mercy.

And whatsoever we lack, Lord, let us not lack Thy mercy.—Amen.

Easter Even.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: . . . and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still.—Rev. xxii., 11.

When a man leaves this world and goes into the other, what is the essential thing that happens? The accidental thing we see plainly enough—the untwisting of the silver cord, the breaking of the golden bowl, the death-bed, the grave, the vacancy,—these are the accidents of the great change, but what is the essential thing? We are sure that it must be—only more solemnly, more awfully—the same that took place when that soul, in this earthly life, passed from one stage of its existence to another,—the taking up of what it really is before God, to let Him see whether it is fit for entrance on a higher life. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,"—has this life of earth wrought in that soul any such holiness as alone can let men see Him whom to see is eternal life?

It is the state of the soul, and not the record of its experiences that is judged. Except a man

repent, he perishes; but it is not the act of repentance, appeasing God's anger, but the new state of the soul, making it fit for heaven, that saves a man from perishing. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and so flesh and blood must be taken away by the kind hands of God, as the builder takes down the props and scaffoldings inside of which his ship was built, that his ship may go freely out into the sea that it was made for. So flesh and blood are taken off, and with them the habits and recollections that belonged only to them, that were only outward things. Then all that the soul has become shows itself. It is not that it *did* certain things, but that it *has* them. It is not that it trusted Christ, as if that were a saving event in its life, but that it has trust in Christ as a saving power in its nature. Its lower disciplines flower out into their higher uses, and show a value for a different life that we never dreamed they had. "It is true," says Bishop Berkeley very wisely, "that there can be no scope for patience when sorrow shall be no more; but there may be need of a temper of mind which shall have been formed by patience." That unknown temper of mind is the joy of the Lord into which the soul shall enter that has been faithful in its sorrows and has grown patient by them.

There is one very large application of this idea, which seems to me very significant and beautiful. The heaven which we expect is not to be a separate, distinct condition, it is to be a heaven for mankind. It is a glorified humanity, like Christ's, in which we are to live and work and enjoy forever. There may be other bliss for other orders of being, but for us men and women there will be a service of and a love to God that shall always be all our own.

The human life here, then, is a necessary condition of the glorified human life hereafter. This meagre and tried humanity must come before that radiant and free humanity that is to stand before the throne of God. This is the lower room of the great school. And that seems to give a purpose and value to many a broken life, and to hint at the solution of many perplexing mysteries. Does it not, for instance, let us understand something of a child's short life, that did not stay long enough on earth for much of duty or education? That child's life, in its own little way, got what it was sent to our human earth to get,—a part in our humanity, a true place in the character, the redemption, and the destinies of our race. It laid its tender and mighty grasp on human loves; and when it went forth into the other life, it went with its humanity.

The angels will always know it for a human soul. It will grow and open and ripen in the higher atmosphere into a beautiful human life. The life and light into which it has entered, is the life and light of the Son of Man who loved us men, and saved us in a human nature like our own.

The question which men so often ask themselves, "Am I fit to die?" really means, "Am I fit to live in heaven?" And that is a question to be answered not by the record of your life, but by the condition of your soul. If you are not fit, you must get to be fit not by doing something, but by becoming something. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The really serious question for us now, at the end of this Lent, is not so much how we have kept it and the Lents which have gone before it, as whether we have come out of it with natures fit, not only for the joy of Easter Day, but for all the new cultures which God has for us in the future. If we have, there is a better and richer life, a clearer and purer light, before us than we have ever yet known, though the circumstances of our lives may be just the same, or even darker, than ever before. There is a fuller experience for us to taste, a higher joy of the Lord for us to enter here; and hereafter the still more

perfect joy, light, labor, and love of the Perfect Life.

O Thou the Lord and Maker of life and light !
Full heavy are the burdens that do weigh
Our spirits earthward, as through twilight gray
We journey to the end and rest of night.

. . . . . .

O Lord of light, steep Thou our souls in Thee !
That when the daylight trembles into shade,
And falls the silence of mortality,
And all is done, we shall not be afraid,
But pass from light to light ; from earth's dull gleam
Into the very heart and heaven of our dream.

Grant, O Lord,
To man, who must die, an ordered house ;
To the faithless, faith ;
To the faithful, confirmation of faith ;
To those who weep, consolation ;
To the elect, joy and gladness ;
To the light-hearted, fear and love ;
To lonely persons, Thy most holy Presence ;
To workers, good works ;
To lovers, Divine Love ;
To haters, godly hatred ;
To Thy soldiers and servants, victory ;
And, after victory, peace ;
And after peace, life and light everlasting.—Amen.

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